

SAMEER: BOLLYWOOD'S POP POET

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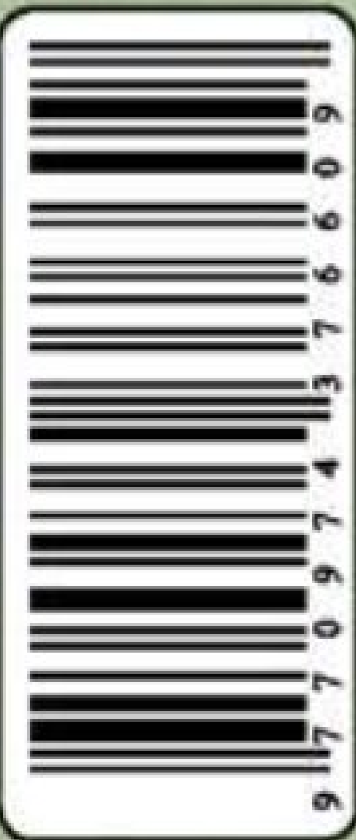
Reader's Digest

SEPTEMBER 2012

BACK PAIN?

The Best Cure

is a simple but effective multidisciplinary approach



DO WE NEED A PRESIDENT?

MY MOST INSPIRING TEACHER

UPDATE YOUR ENGLISH!



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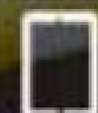
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INDIA GATE
BASMATI RICE

Unique Rice Recipe Challenge

ARE YOU TRULY MASTER OF YOUR KITCHEN - PROVE IT!



Dry Fruit Pulao!
This months unique recipe

4 servings
Active Time: 15 minutes
Total Time: 30 minutes

INGREDIENTS

1 teaspoon canola oil
½ cup raw Cashews, Almonds
1 cup basmati rice, rinsed with cold water
½ cup golden raisins
½ teaspoon salt
10-15 whole black pepper corn
1 ½ cups water
Saffron for garnish

PREPARATION

Heat oil in a medium pan over medium-high heat. Add nuts and sauté until toasted for about 1 minute. Add rice, raisins, salt, pepper and water; bring this to a boil. Reduce heat to low, cover and cook until the rice is tender and all the water is absorbed, The procedure will take a maximum of 15 to 20 minutes. in this process fluff the rice with a fork & Voila! You have a Awesome Dry Fruit Pulao ready to gobble!!!!

Microwave Variation:

Toss nuts with oil in a 2 1/2-quart casserole. Microwave on High until nuts are golden, 2 to 3 minutes.

Add rice, raisins, salt, pepper and water. Cover casserole with a lid or vented plastic wrap and microwave on High power 5 minutes. Stir once, cover and microwave on Medium, without stirring, until rice is cooked, about 10 minutes more. Let stand, covered, for 5 minutes. With a fork, fluff the rice.

If your recipe is TRULY A WINNER, your recipe with your profile photo will be published in our next issue.

Send us your unique rice recipe at:
Log on to the below link and upload your recipe
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Editor's Note

Our Picky Search for the Truth

Worldwide, everything we print in Reader's Digest is checked for accuracy. Our researchers go through every word, no matter who wrote it. Even this editorial you're reading, or the jokes and letters you send us are fact-checked if selected, since anyone could misquote somebody, or send us erroneous figures or wrong info which, if published, could do harm.

For our cover story on backache, Research Editor Mamta Sharma had to double-check the text with everyone featured in it. In the process, she found two more relevant studies that merited mention. She also found that an expert quoted did not really have the reported title of "Dr." These were among some 25 changes suggested in Mamta's research report.

Meanwhile, Research Director Padmavathi Subramanian had a unique problem resolving the actual number of songs Lyricist Sameer (page 92) had written. Sameer himself never kept accurate count. Figures from the Internet didn't convince Padmavathi, who finally found a reliable person who tracks Hindi music, and got a final count. When the research was run by Sameer, he readily agreed. Padmavathi also used YouTube to listen to Sameer's songs to get their Hindi-to-English transliterations right. And, among other niggling details she corrected: "Best Lyricist award" to "Best Lyrics award," which is what *Filmfare* calls their prize.

It's not that writers are unreliable—it's just that absolute accuracy is often hard to achieve when you're busy writing. I'll confess that my own Language article (page 48) required a few changes, right from the birthday rhyme I started with ("It's '*bonny and* blithe, *and* good and gay'," Mamta reported. "Not 'bonnie, blithe, good and gay'," as I'd written). Being Editor doesn't give me any immunity. Happy error-free reading!

Mohan Sivanand

editor.india@rd.com

Where facts are concerned, Padmavathi (left) and Mamta have the last laugh.



MULTIVISION GRAPHICS

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(DOG) PICTURE MEDIA; CORBIS

Reader's Digest

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Outrageous!

AN OPEN PHOTO-EDITORIAL



Wanted: a better deal for train-crash victims.

INDIA TODAY IMAGES

When there's a train accident and people die, the compensation that the next of kin receive is pathetic—far less than air-accident victims are entitled to. Must the mode of travel have any bearing on the value of human life?

After the Tamil Nadu Express from Delhi to Chennai caught fire in July, the ex-gratia payment made for each victim was just ₹5 lakh. Compare that to the May 2010 Air India crash in Mangalore, where the compensation settled per victim was over ₹72 lakh.

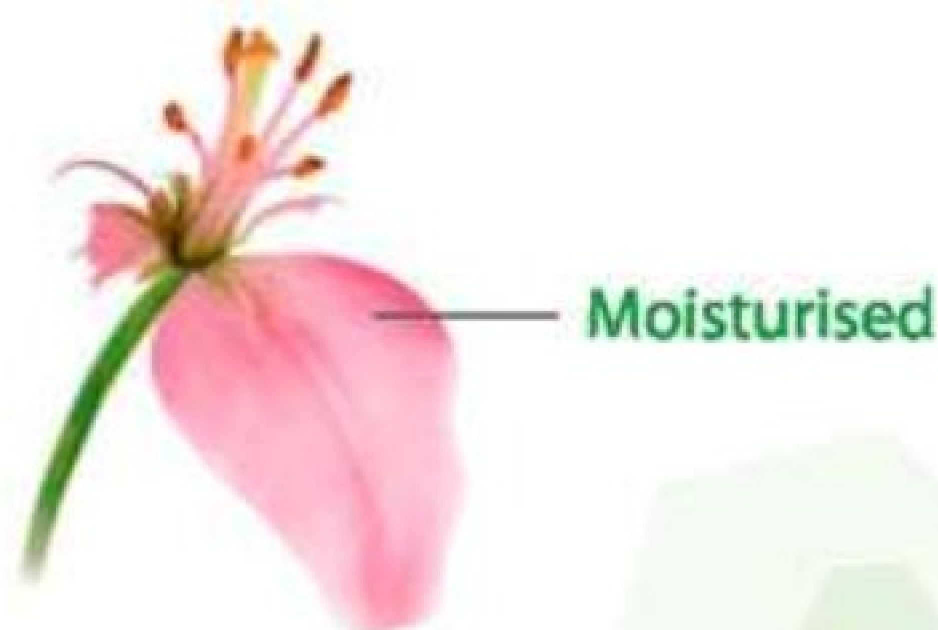
India has among the largest number of rail passengers—some 130 lakh persons take trains daily. A relatively small number of passengers, a few hundred, die from train accidents every year (actually many more die only because they cross rail tracks—don't count them here).

Accident insurance cover for all rail passengers has been suggested, but the subject has been shelved or forgotten, perhaps because rail passengers are not seen to be as well-heeled as those who travel by air!

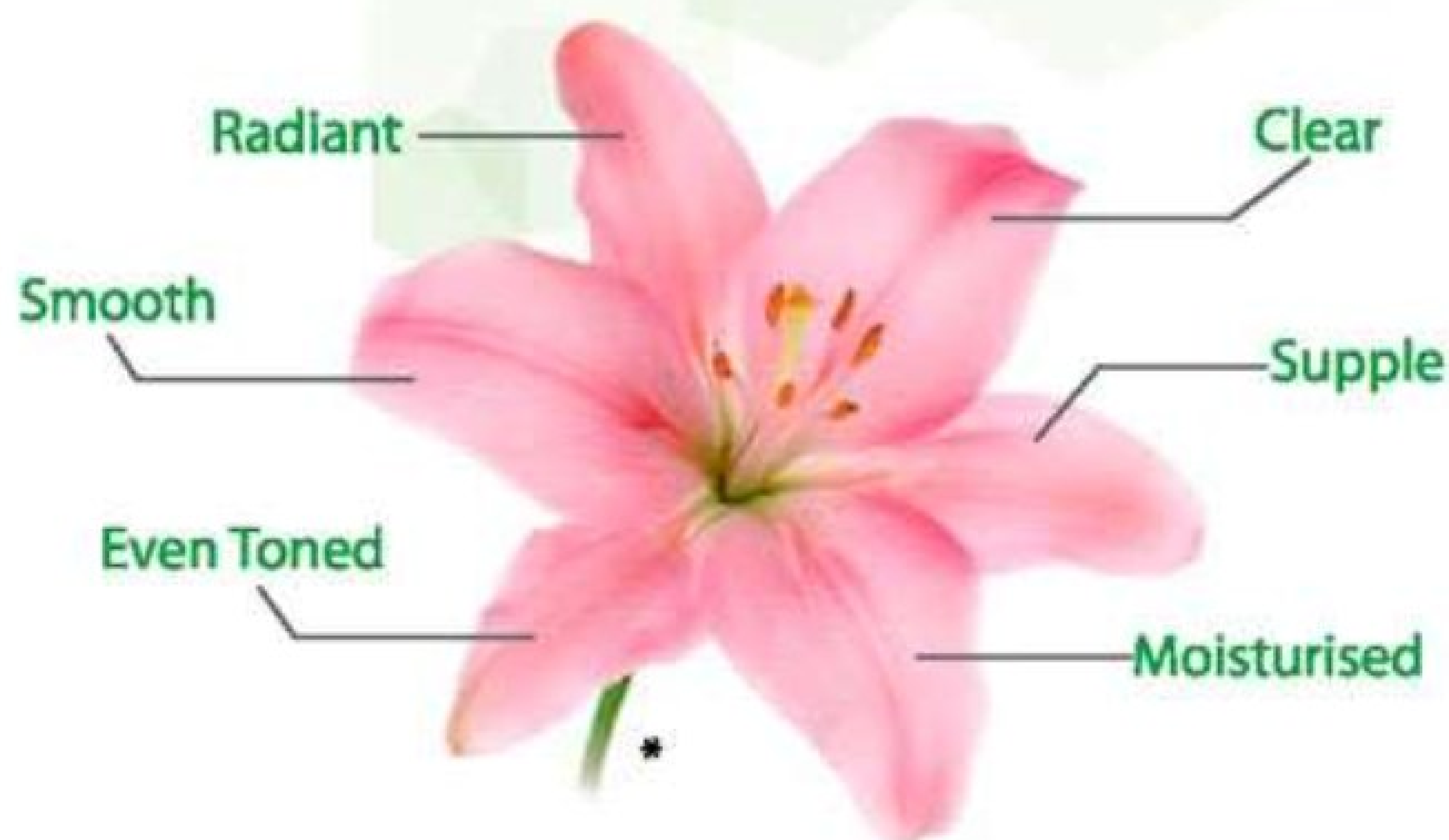
Even taking an extra rupee per train ticket as insurance premium can provide nearly ₹500 crore a year, part of which can be paid out and part invested. The Railways can thus run its own insurance scheme and enable decent compensations that compare with those paid to air-accident victims. ■

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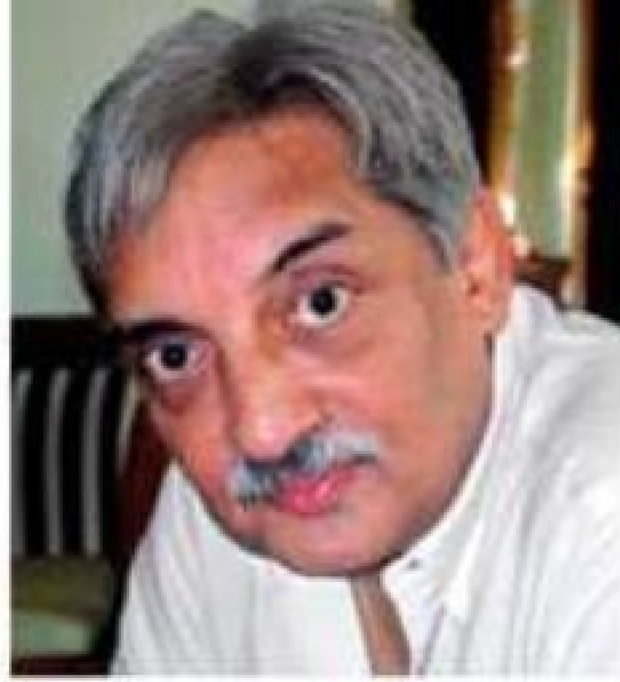
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* Creative visualization of 6 Pro Care benefits



Greenheart



BY BITTU SAHGAL

They're Saving the Tiger

We sat in silence in the dark of night as the large head appeared from behind the thick foliage. The female was young, healthy and alert. Seconds later, she walked confidently to the edge of a waterhole, followed by not one, not two, but three beautiful young cubs. Like works of art on display, all four tigers bent low at the waterhole that had been created for them and for the myriad creatures that shared their troubled kingdom.

The Ghosri tigers had come visiting and we watched them with rapt attention on our closed-circuit TV screens, in the conservation retreat of Harsh and Poonam Dhanwatey, a husband-and-wife team whose life has been dedicated to the protection of tigers in and around Maharashtra's Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve.

Their son Nikhil had carefully positioned the cameras and cabled them 40 metres from their conservation retreat, near the waterhole that had turned into a magnet for every conceivable animal found in the tiger reserve itself. We were making preparations to set up one of the first Community Conservation Reserves in Central India.

Originally into business, the Dhanwateys changed tracks midstream with Poonam shutting down a thriving interior-design business in response to just one meeting they had with Dr Ullas Karanth and Valmik Thapar, two of India's finest tiger people, in Nagpur. In time they volunteered for wildlife fieldwork with Dr Karanth and found this passion taking over their entire existence. In their own words: "From admirers of wildlife we became passionate defenders and we launched our non-governmental organization called Tiger Research and Conservation Trust (TRACT)."

The Dhanwateys lived for two years in a small hut that was their field camp near the famous Tadoba Lake and they discovered the secrets of the forest in the best way possible, by walking its trails, and generally learning all they could about the magical mix of life that comprised this tropical, dry deciduous forest.

They call their conservancy

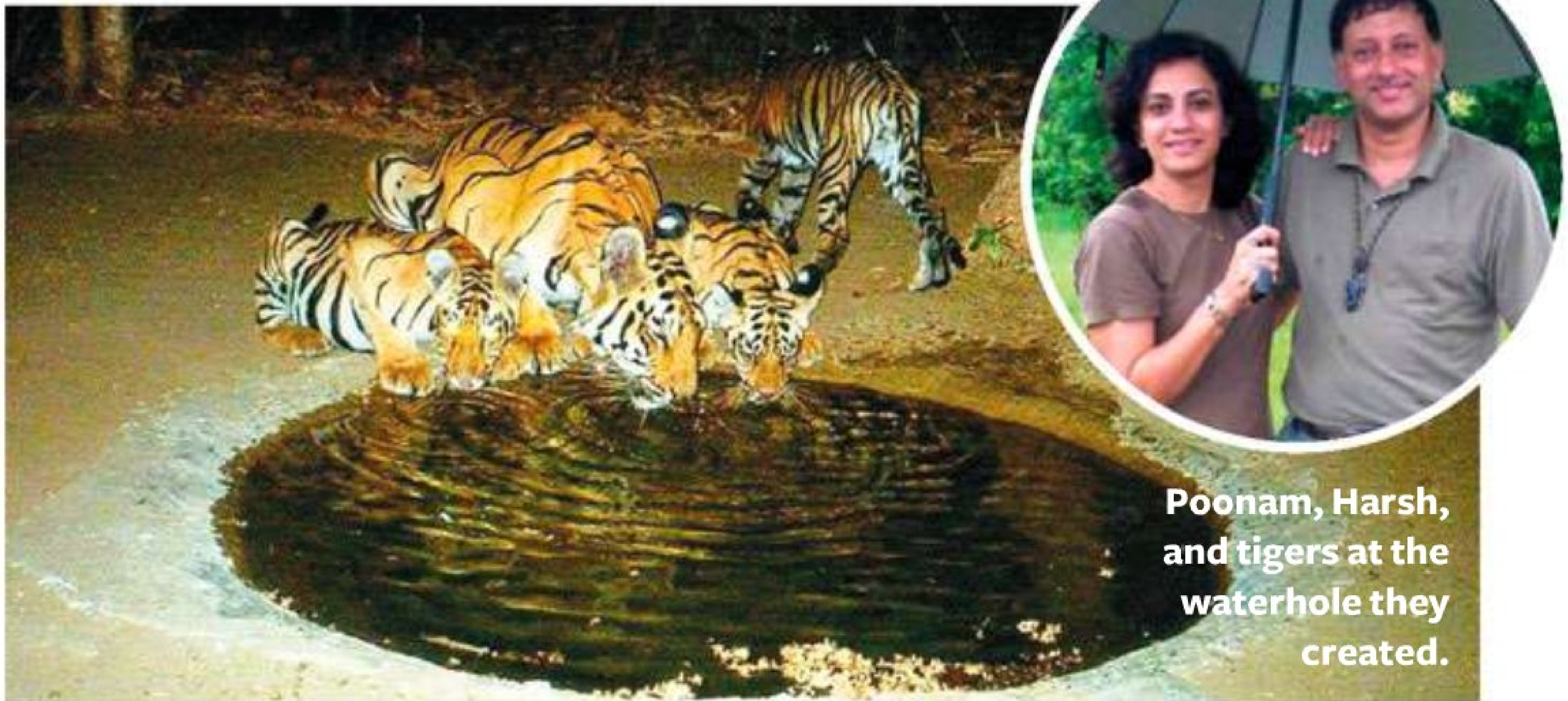
Bittu Sahgal is Editor of *Sanctuary Asia* magazine and a member of the National Board for Wildlife.

I came to the Sabarmati Ashram expecting to find a grand legacy; instead I found austerity and humility. As I walked barefoot in the footsteps of the nation's greatest hero, I was transported to my own place of birth.

Bapu realised his journey here. You never know what path you might discover for yourself.

Amitabh Bachchan





Poonam, Harsh, and tigers at the waterhole they created.

tigress@ghosri, and it's located on a relatively small seven-acre parcel of land just two kilometres from the boundary of the tiger reserve, at a village named Ghosri. Where *bajra* and other coarse grains used to grow, they allowed grasses to re-colonize the land and selectively planted teak trees and local species of bamboo. Erecting no fences around their conservancy, they hired locals to patrol the area and spoke to neighbouring farmers about their plans. These farmers are now poised to add their own farms to the conservancy, which promises to offer them a better livelihood than they could possibly earn from marginal farming.

Additionally, supported by the Wildlife Conservation Society, the Dhanwateys worked to prevent fires, patrolled in the buffer area and soon became one with the park authorities whom they helped to resolve human-animal conflicts, particularly when tigers would kill livestock or worse. Not surprisingly, tigress@ghosri is today a protected haven for wild animals where it is often easier to see tigers, leopards, wild dogs, sloth bears, langurs, four-horned antelopes and birds of all descriptions than in Tadoba's much denser core.

Poonam and Harsh now plan to share their success with the hard pressed farmers of the region, currently suffering one of the worst droughts in recent years. In cooperation with the Maharashtra State Forest Department, they intend to channel funds into a conservancy comprising a cooperative of locals who will tomorrow be able to offer visitors homestays in the little piece of paradise they have created for themselves.

"We cannot imagine a life better than this," says Harsh. "And by helping farmers to flow with nature's tide, we know we are doing the best we can for them and for the tigers of Ghosri." ■

TIGRESS@GHOSRI/SANCTUARY ASIA

React

LETTERS FROM READERS

Are Indians Funny?

Ashok Mahadevan's interesting and insightful article [In My Opinion, July] somewhat justifies the political reaction to the Shankar cartoon. But humour is a necessary lubricant to help us function together. What if all southerners were offended by "Madrasi" jokes? Becoming tolerant to unflattering humour is a sign of maturity—something our politicians don't want.

Ashwin Motha, via e-mail


In My Opinion

Do Indians Have Any Sense of Humour?

Oh yes, we do, but with a caveat

The Shankar cartoon drawn over 60 years ago found place in a textbook recently. Is it not a joke in itself that we have taken so long to understand or misunderstand its meaning?

R. Natarajan, Chennai

Anyone who wishes to join politics must have a good sense of humour because the common man loves political cartoons. Dr Ambedkar, too, would have taken it in good humour and let it go. Fortunately, Shankar Pillai did not live to see this day.

Vandana Sharma, Patiala

When our politicians are such a fractured community, even cartoons seeking to highlight issues in a lighter vein lead to debate and destruction of public property. With many of us engaged in the pursuit of money, there is scant regard for larger issues—if we had more empathy, an overwhelming number of Indians would not be struggling for basic necessities. *R. Rajan,* via e-mail

Indian society is deeply divided along religious, caste and class lines. Even the most harmless comment or cartoon can insult. Be it Shashi Tharoor's tweet about not travelling cattle class or a foreign athlete calling a bunch of unruly Indian spectators monkeys—anything can hurt us. *Dr Arun Behere,* via e-mail

Laughing at people can be a method of rebellion against authority, a way of belittling those who have some power over us. A good sense of humour involves laughing with people, not at them. *Beena Mathur,* Pune

We tend to have a perverse feeling of happiness when someone fails. We rarely stop to help victims of road accidents. We should have a feeling of companionship with the less privileged but we enjoy our superiority—yes, we lack empathy.

Sunil Kumar Saxena, Kanpur

Deriving pleasure from the misfortune of others isn't uniquely Indian. There's even a word for it, borrowed from German: Schadenfreude. Please let us know if there's any Indian equivalent. —*Ed.*

Cartoons, like poetry, warrant a deep sense of imagination. As a Dalit and a professor, I see Nehru whipping the snail to move faster but Ambedkar restraining the snail *not* to move fast as he wants to draft the Constitution—and the destiny of the nation—with utmost care.

M.K. Rajan, Bangalore

Reader M.K. Rajan gets this month's Best Letter Prize. —*Ed.*

Cartoonists have every right to portray their emotions creatively. Cartoons are a window to our past.

Dipali Kathiriya, via e-mail

The uproar over the cartoon is a futile crusade of our MPs to boast of their respect for our past political heroes. Yet, had they even little regard for them, they would have imbibed their virtues. Today's India, tainted with corruption, poverty, caste and gender discrimination, does not give a picture of the nation our founding fathers envisaged.

Samiksha Pattnaik, Bhubaneswar

Tireless Scholar

Shri Arvind Kumar's seminal work [Wonderful Wordsmith, July] proves how passion and zeal can lead to enduring achievement. He deserves a Padma award. I wish such work is produced in every Indian language.

Prakash Almeida, via e-mail

I would occasionally look for a Hindi thesaurus and its non-availability assured me that I could still write one—a dream I had cherished long ago. But life's unfortunate events put my idea on the back burner. When I read about Arvind Kumar's work, I felt a twinge of regret but also realized what a mammoth task it was. I am glad somebody did it. *Padmaja Shastri,* Pune

Your article made me proud to be an Indian and inculcated in me a deep respect for those who are Indian not only by birth but also at heart. I realized how distant I had become from my mother tongue and got reconnected to the enriching ideals of Hindi. *Aakriti Raheja,* New Delhi

A Piece of Pi

I was surprised to see that our great mathematician, Srinivasa Ramanujan, did not figure anywhere in "Quick Study: π" [July]. One Ramanujan formula is the basis for

the calculation of π to ten trillion decimal digits. His formulae for the reciprocals of π, π^2, π^3... have guided many leading mathematicians too.

H.R. Seetharam, Bangalore

It would have been nice if your article had not missed out on the seminal contribution of Aryabhatta who, in 499 AD, had worked the value of π to four decimal places. Also, back in 800 BC, the Sanskrit text *Baudhayana Shulba Sutra* mentioned the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter as approximately 3.

Vikram Sawant, Belgaum

Killer Buses

It's no different anywhere in India—only the nickname varies. If it's Killer Pallavan in Chennai, it's Red Killers in Kochi [Outrageous, July]. It may be wise to have our traffic officials visit road accident victims to see the consequences of rash driving. It might force them to take strict action against offenders.

Dr Dennis P. Jose, Kochi

Blame the careless licence-issuing authorities that don't administer proper tests. Reckless drivers should be heavily fined, outdated vehicles removed and all bus drivers given adequate rest.

Dr N.P. Singh, Pratapgarh, UP

You should have also mentioned the Pune bus driver who mowed down several people and vehicles before being stopped by a young man. He reportedly had some mental illness. With the responsibilities and pressures bus drivers face, they must undergo routine physical and mental health tests, just like pilots.

Sudha Santhanam, Pune

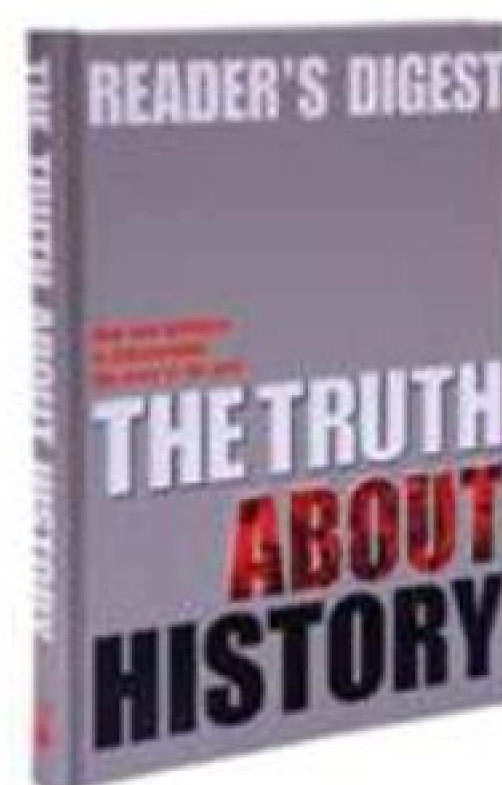
We tend to hate discipline and take it as a sign of slavery. Those in authority find it below their dignity to follow rules and being able to violate them is like a status symbol. Our law makers are also the law breakers whose example is followed by others.

Dr S.S. Sadera, Rourkela

War and Peace

True relations are not who we are born with [Blood Brothers, July]. They are formed with love, care, respect and honesty. When there is a conflict between our conscience and the call of duty, taking a decision can be really hard and even harder when lives are at stake. In this war between men, being human won.

Sandeep B. Rathore, Jhansi



The author of the best letter, chosen by the editors, will receive a prize: The Reader's Digest book ***The Truth About History*** priced at ₹899.

Post opinions to the Editorial address, or e-mail: editor.india@rd.com (no attachments please). Include your phone number and address. Letters will be condensed and edited for clarity.

Here & Now



DUBIOUS TRENDS

Dyeing Dogs

There's a new fad among some Chinese pet-owners: dyeing dogs' fur to make the pooches look like other animals.

Giving fluffy pale dogs a coat of black around the eyes and on the ears and legs to make them resemble pandas is popular. Other choices include full-coat dyes to make the dogs look like tigers, zebras and even Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

Depending on the look, it can be an eight-hour process of bleaching, then re-colouring, requiring an extremely patient (or possibly sedated) pup.

However, Mary Peng of the International Centre for Veterinary Services in Beijing is not a fan, saying that the chemicals used are often unregulated and can sometimes be fatal for pets.

Hazel Flynn



Inset: Small pandas? Look again—they're chow chow dogs in a Chinese park.

PHOTOS: PICTURE MEDIA

Here & Now

YOU BE THE JUDGE

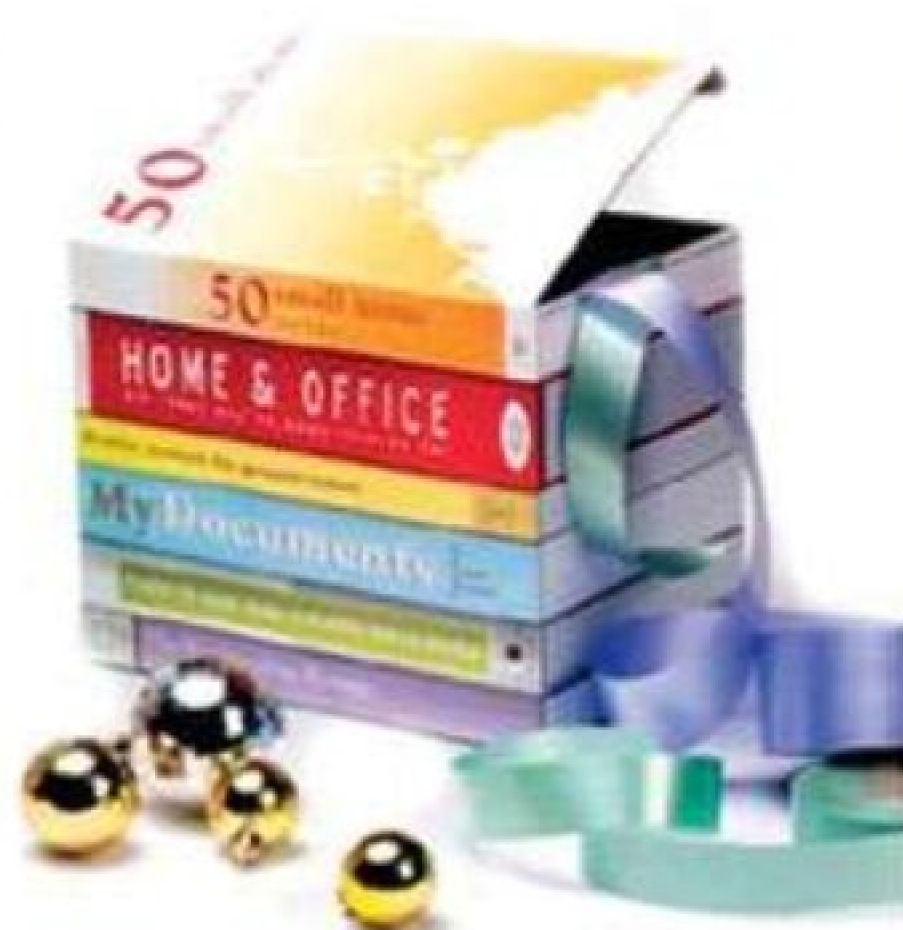
Restroom With a View

This penthouse, created by Mexican architecture firm Hernandez Silva in Guadalajara, is stunning. On the top floor of a 1970s building, the penthouse is a sleek, modern space with gorgeous views, stylish entertaining areas ... and a toilet like no other.

Running beneath the apartment is a cavity intended for a second lift—but it was never installed, leaving a vertiginous space. Rather than hide the shaft, the architects incorporated it into their design, fitting a glass floor that draws the eye all the way down the 14 storeys below. It's unique, no doubt, but could you live with it? *H.F.*



VOLUMINOUS?



BOOX STORE

These sturdy cardboard storage boxes, designed to look like a stack of books, seem ideal for book lovers. Certainly, their design pedigree is good—they are the work of internationally exhibited Israeli designer Shahar Peleg—but we're not convinced.

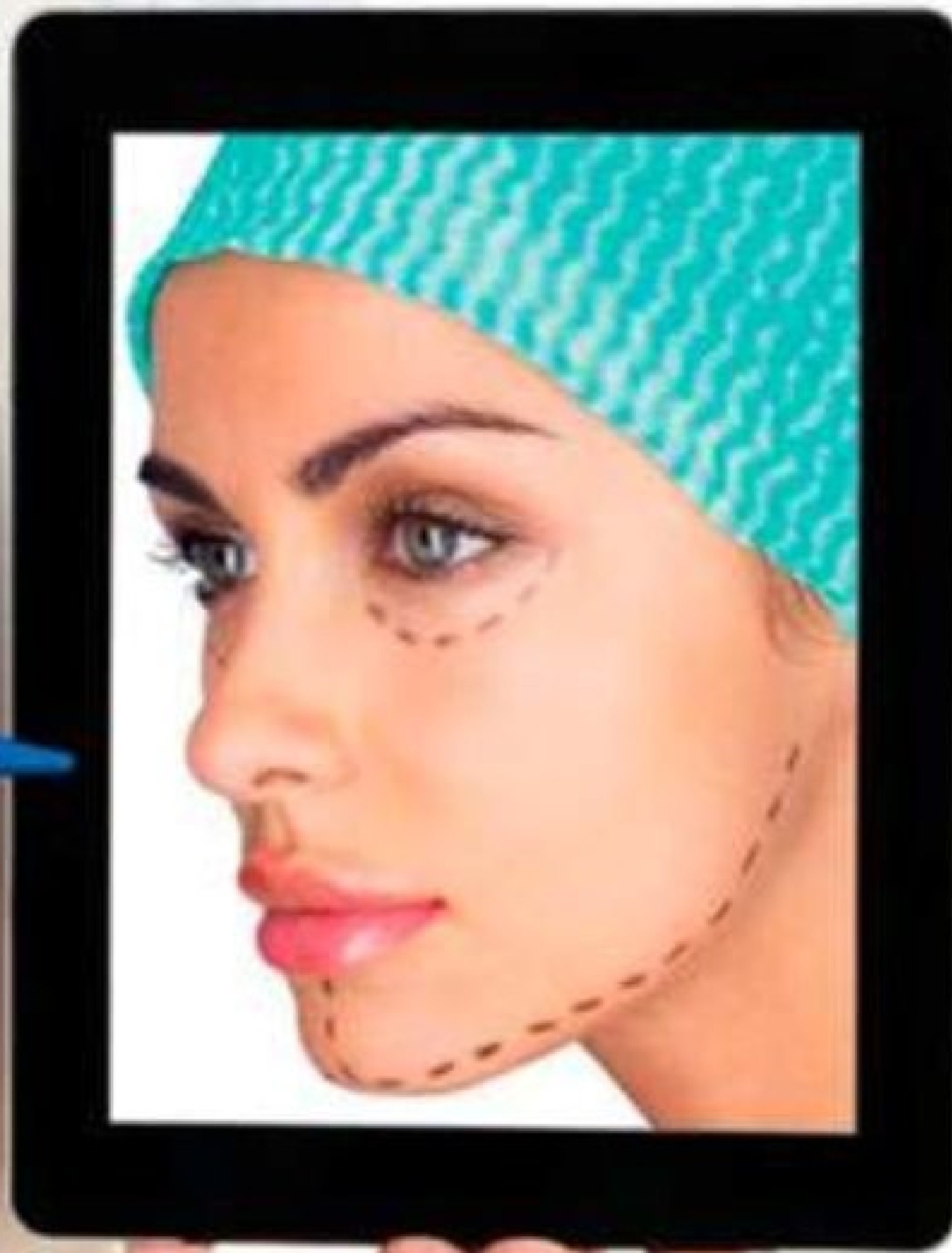
First off, there's the word "boox"—enough to bring shudders to any reader worth their Kindle. Then there's the selection of titles and cover designs. "100 Old Stuff" and "100 New Stuff"? Hmm. At least "The Neverending Storage" has a little wit. See *peleg-design.com* for more information. *H.F.*



Here & Now

OH, STOP IT!

FaceTime Facelifts



It seemed at first as if it might be a spoof, but that's just wishful thinking. A US plastic surgeon really is offering a facelift designed to make people using face-to-face video-calling, such as Apple's FaceTime, look less jowly.

The surgeon, Dr Robert Sigal, claims he came up with the idea after his wife bought an iPhone and decided she didn't like the way she looked on it. A standard neck-lift wouldn't fix the "problem," since it leaves a scar under the chin, visible from the upward-pointing angle many people employ while video-chatting. Instead, his $10,000 procedure moves the scars back under the ears.

Our alternative? Hold the phone horizontal and dip your chin a bit. Even better, try focusing on what the other person is saying. *H.F.*

Modern Romance



We can only wonder if Cynthia Niles, who designs and makes these customized wedding cake toppers, was inspired by her own experience. From around $75 (plus postage from the US), you get a determined bride and her distracted groom, personalized to your hair colours, and his preferred game and brands of soft drink, gaming console and controller. Just about the only thing that can't be customized is to swap the sexes so that the gamer is female. *H.F.*

PHOTOS: (DOCTOR) THINKSTOCK





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CULTURE

The Colour of Gender

A checkered history of pink and blue

When did girls get pegged with pink and boys with blue? According to *Smithsonian* magazine, the hues' history is a study in contradictions. In 1918, the trade publication *Earnshaw's Infants' Department* reported that "pink, being a more decided and stronger colour, is more suitable for the boy, while blue, which is more delicate and dainty, is prettier for the girl." This sentiment stuck until the 1940s, when retailers sensed a shift in parents' preferences and navy became the more masculine shade. Then with the advent of women's liberation, many mothers declined rosier "girlie" tones for their daughters. Today, the pendulum has swung again, with Generation Xers opting to dress their girls in the pink items they were denied as children. This time, however, it's more than just colour coding. What was then a simple pink blouse now gets a princess patch and a shower of glitter.

According to researchers, most kids don't understand gender until age seven, so we can assume that the cotton candy cuteness is for Mom. Meanwhile, toy, clothing, and advertising companies clean up by following suit.

To depict the bond between colour and gender, Korean-born photographer JeongMee Yoon snapped photos of children almost overwhelmed by their designated colours in her Pink & Blue Project (let's just say the results are pretty black and white).





Picture perfect: Boys and girls in Yoon's Pink & Blue Project.

JEONGMEE YOON (2)

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Here&Now

CULTURE

Random Ideas From All Over



Men in Love.

Men are more likely to be happy than women when their partner says "I love you," according to researchers at the MIT Sloan School of Management in Massachusetts, USA. And men in relationships are often the first to confess such feelings. *Medical Daily*



Instant Friends.

Talking to strangers will be easier in 2012 thanks to smart phones that detect like-minded people near you. Proximity-based social networks will identify individuals you should know, based on shared interests ranging from music preferences to relationship statuses. *businessnewsdaily.com*



Burn After Reading.

Anxious after sending an important password via e-mail, US entrepreneur Jacob Robbins created **Burn Note,** a website that lets a sender set a time frame in which an e-mail can be read by a recipient. Then—poof!—the e-mail disappears from the inbox without a trace. *Alison Caporimo*

FULL-CONTACT SPORT

Who knew that those jubilant high fives and encouraging little pats we see between players on the sports fields could actually win a game? A team of social scientists at the University of California, Berkeley, USA, followed all 30 teams in 2008 and 2009, tracking the players' fist pounds and chest bumps, and found that a physical show of team spirit boosts cooperation, relieves anxiety, and can improve a team's performance in a game. *A.C.*



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BEEHIVE

Here&Now

FICTION CHOICES

Ancient Light

by John Banville (Viking)

John Banville is a wonder. His prose is so good that you savour it like fine wine, reading more and more slowly to see how it's done. (Even so, you never quite can.) In this novel, Alexander Cleave, an aging actor, is filming in Italy where he passes the time with a depressive actress. But that's only in the fuzzy foreground. At the heart of the book are two very different memories. At 15, he had an affair with the mother of one of his best friends. And ten years ago, his daughter committed suicide.

Alexander has his creator's knack of being able to describe place, nature and feelings, with the skills of a poet. Yet he's appallingly unaware of the havoc he causes by grabbing for emotion at the expense of others' happiness. Banville won the 2005 Man Booker Prize for *The Sea*, but this is his most powerful work to date—and that's saying something. A must.



The Truth

by Michael Palin (Weidenfeld)

It's perhaps not surprising that Michael Palin's new novel is about a thoroughly nice chap wandering around the world—but it's also a thoroughly good read. Our

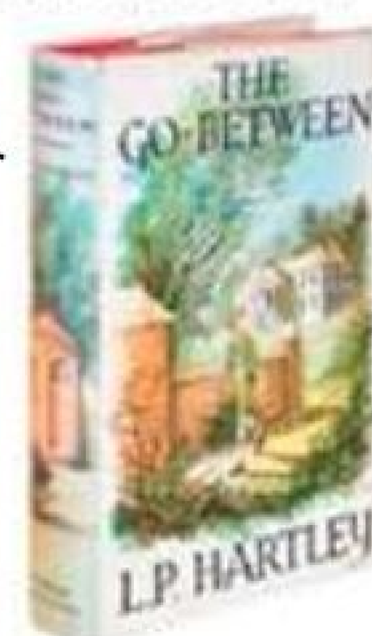


hero is Keith Mabbut, a 56-year-old journalist-writer, who over the years has compromised his youthful idealism to pay the bills. Then the chance comes to write a biography of the celebrated environmental campaigner Hamish Melville.

But the gullible Keith has some shocks waiting for him when he begins to discover what his hero actually got up to. The truth, it turns out, is a complicated business, best unfolded in fiction. ("Facts are just facts... If you want the truth, read Jane

CLASSICS CORNER: THE GO-BETWEEN

L.P. Hartley's *The Go-Between* is now so overshadowed by its own first line (all together now: "The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there") that everything else about it is in danger of being forgotten. In fact, the rest of the book is pretty great, too—combining a strong plot with a quietly devastating portrait of lost innocence. It's also a classic summer-holiday novel, with the narrator's life-changing stay at the house of his schoolfriend beginning on July 10, 1900.



Austen.") Fortunately, the fiction here is well crafted, warm hearted—and wholly recommended.

Before I Met You

by Lisa Jewell (Century)

As a teenager, Betty is taken to live in Guernsey with her step-grandmother, a stylish old lady called Arlette, who wears red velvet shoes. Arlette clearly has a "past" as a Bright Young Thing in 1920s London, and when she dies, she leaves her modest estate to one Clara Pickle.

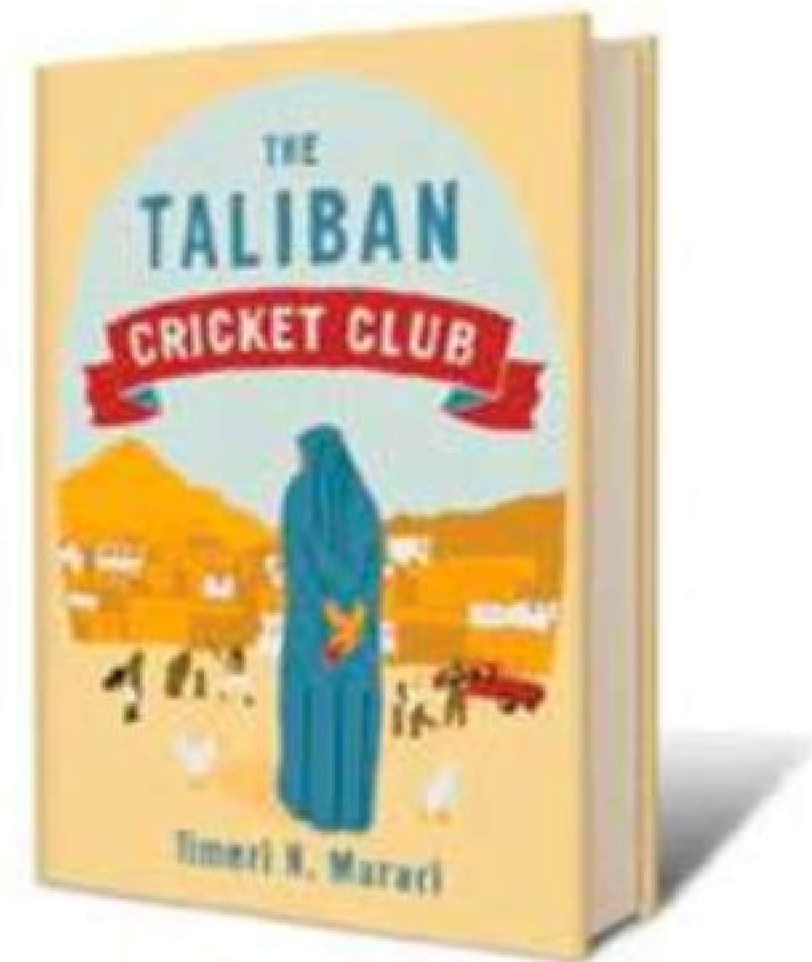
From there, the novel alternates between Betty's quest to find Clara in the Soho of the 1990s, and Arlette's glamorous, bohemian adventures of 70 years earlier. Both are brilliantly evoked in this gripping, tear-jerking and sometimes very funny novel. Fans of Lisa Jewell's previous bestsellers such as *Ralph's Party* and *Thirty-nothing* will not be disappointed.



The Taliban Cricket Club

by Timeri N. Murari (Allen & Unwin)

Rukhsana, a young journalist in Kabul in 2000, is summoned to the terrifying Ministry to Promote Virtue and Punish Vice. Shivering in her uncomfortable burkha, she's sure that the brutal minister is going to confront her with her secret (and of course illegal) journalism. Instead, he has a job for her. To improve the Taliban's international image, they are going to field a cricket team—and Rukhsana knows how to play.



So will she be able to use the cricket match as a means to get out of Afghanistan? There's many a twist before we find the answer in this tender and enchanting novel, which made me miss three stops as I read it on the bus. Her police interrogator falls in love with Rukhsana—and I defy any reader not to do the same.

QUICK QUIZ This is from *The Story of English in 100 Words* by David Crystal, out in paperback in July. But can you guess what entry it refers to?

"Thanks to a fine piece of research by American lexicographer Allan Walker Read, we now know that it first appeared in 1839 in a Boston newspaper, where there was a vogue for inventing humorous abbreviations using initial letters—an early instance of a language game. KY, for example, would be used for the phrase "know yuse" (= 'no use')." Answer on page 42.

@Work

ALL IN A DAY'S WORK



"You're just the kind of person we're looking for to test our airline seats."

While working on a magazine story about the problems consumers face with banks, I asked my colleagues if any of them had any such issues.

"Yes," said one. "Every time I make a withdrawal, my balance keeps decreasing." *Deven Kanal,* Mumbai

Here's a thought that popped into our heads after reading the following excuse notes: Maybe teachers should stop worrying about their students and start grading parents.

- "Dear school, please excuse John being absent on Jan. 28, 29, 30, 31, 32 and also 33."
- "Please excuse Roland from physical education for a few days. Yesterday he fell out of a tree and misplaced his hip."

When Donsa, my colleague, was promoted, we decided to celebrate. Her boss called the baker and ordered a cake.

"Two questions," said the baker. "Is Donsa a man or a woman? And what do you want the cake to say?"

The cake should read "Congratulations," the boss said. "Oh, and Donsa's a woman."

The next day, the office celebrated with a cake that read: CONGRATULATIONS—DONSA'S A WOMAN.

Andrea Johnson

Everyone's a critic, juror or judge. A poster in my local coffee shop reads: "We hang local artists."

Alice Gill

A shopper at my in-laws' clothing store couldn't understand why she had to pay so much for her purchase. "I got this from the '15% to 35% Off' rack," she complained. "And I pick 35%."

Katy Gibbs

ILLUSTRATED BY H.L. SCHWADRON

To celebrate my retirement, my wife and I dined with a friend we hadn't seen in years. The next day, he sent us an e-mail that included—I hope—an honest mistake: "How wonderful it was to see you both aging."

Lawrence Dunham

My wife runs a small garment factory. She recently had to ask her longest-serving employee why she was late for work. "For the first time in 20 years I had the upstairs front seat on the bus," the woman answered. "So I stayed on to the terminus."

Mervyn Saunders

My husband and I are both in an Internet business, but he's the one who truly lives, eats and breathes computers.

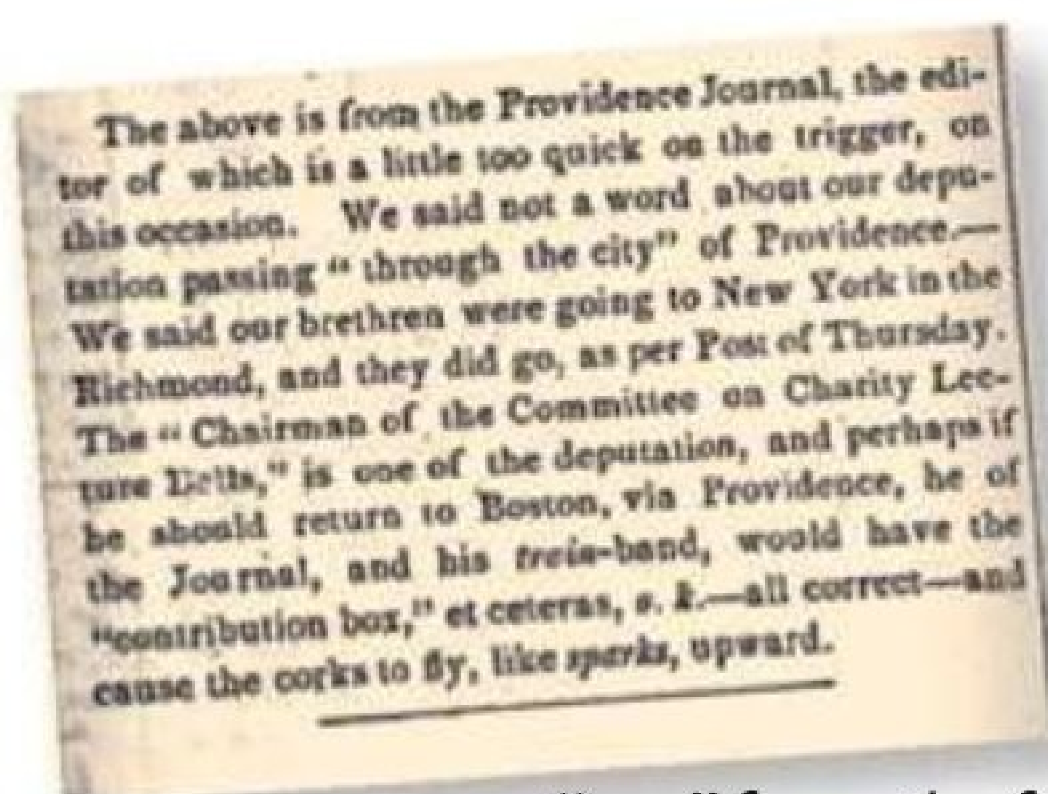
I finally realized how bad it had become when I was scratching his back one day.

"No, not there," he directed. "Scroll down."

Christine Ayman

...AND THE QUICK QUIZ?

SEE PAGE 39


The above is from the Providence Journal, the edi-
tor of which is a little too quick on the trigger, on
this occasion. We said not a word about our depu-
tation passing "through the city" of Providence.—
We said our brethren were going to New York in the
Richmond, and they did go, as per Post of Thursday.
The "Chairman of the Committee on Charity Lec-
ture Bells," is one of the deputation, and perhaps if
he should return to Boston, via Providence, he of
the Journal, and his *freie*-band, would have the
"contribution box," et ceteras, o. k.—all correct—and
cause the corks to fly, like *sparks*, upward.

The answer was "OK"—standing for "oll korrect." *The Story of English in 100 Words* (Profile) begins with "roe" from the fifth century and ends with "twittersphere" from the 21st, with every word having its own story to tell.

HELP WANTING

Here's a job to avoid: hiring manager. Can you see what you'd have to contend with?

- The candidate answered his cellphone and asked the interviewer to leave her own office because it was a "private" conversation.
- The candidate told the interviewer he wouldn't stay with the job long because he might get an inheritance if his uncle died—and the old man wasn't "looking too good."
- The candidate said she couldn't provide a writing sample because all her writing had been for the CIA and it was "classified."
- When the applicant was offered food, he declined, saying he didn't want to line his stomach with grease before going out drinking.
- The candidate flushed the toilet while talking to the interviewer during a phone interview.

My part of the office at a large UK newspaper was so gloomy it was known as "The Back Alley." After years of suffering, we had to do something about it, so a colleague asked the management if we could have more lighting. Their written reply was very understanding. "We can't see our way clear to installing more lights," it said. "But we will try to have the windows cleaned more often."

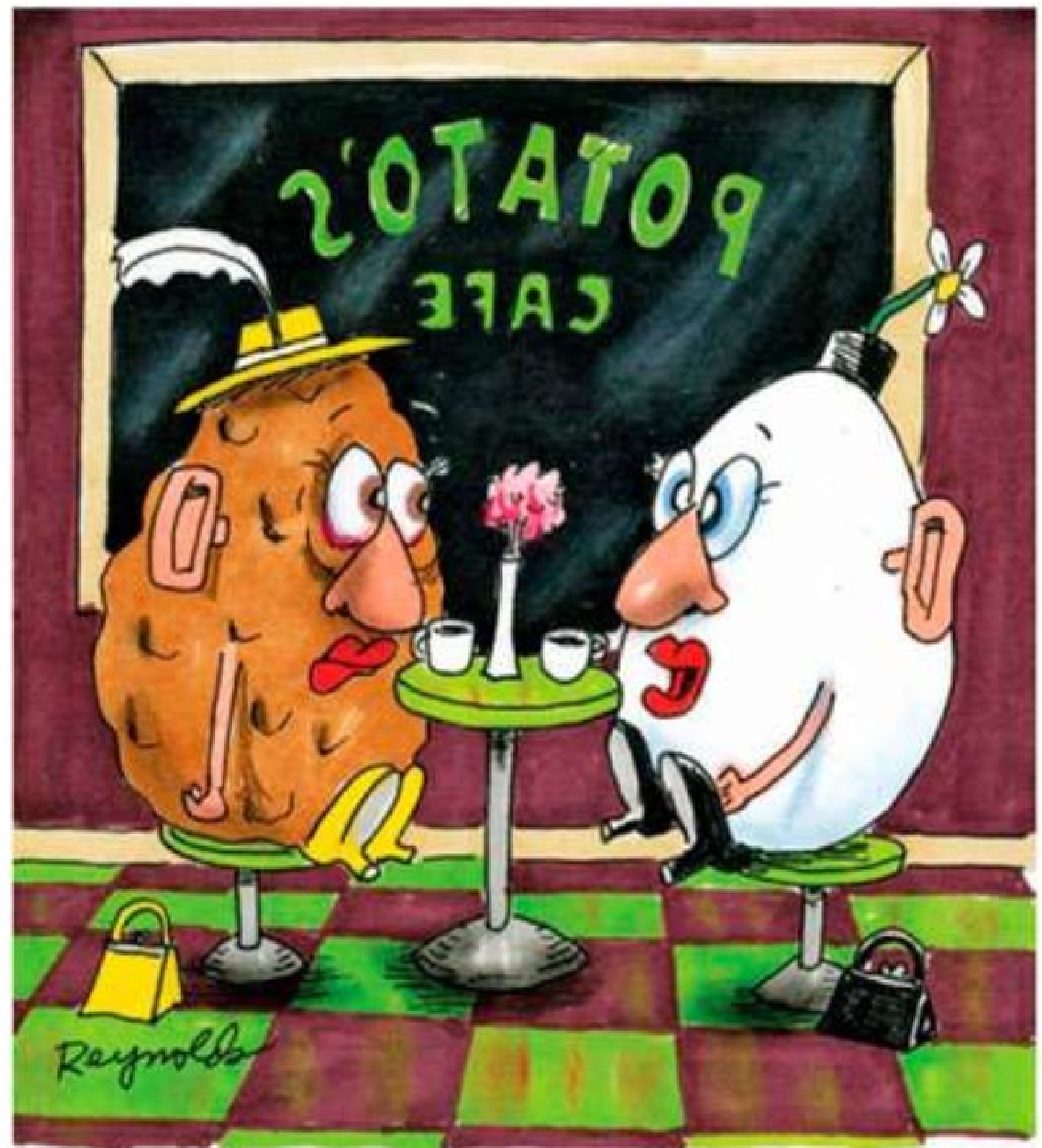
Albert Peacey

Get paid! Your anecdote is worth ₹1000. Post it to the Editorial address or e-mail: **editor.india@rd.com**

The final round of the hammer throw event comes down to a Russian soldier, a Bulgarian farmer and Larry, who spends his days playing videogames in his parents' basement. The Russian throws first: 85 metres. Interviewed later, he says, "I'm from a military family, which gives me discipline."

Then the Bulgarian throws: 88 metres. He tells reporters, "I'm from a farming family. This gives me strength."

Now it's Larry's turn. He slings the hammer 95 metres, winning gold. Later, he explains, "I'm from a long line of lazy people, and I was taught, 'If anyone ever puts a hammer in your hand, throw it as far away as you can'."



"No, Ida, it wasn't a chemical peel. I went under the knife."

Did you know that dolphins are so clever that, within a few weeks of captivity, they can train people to stand on the very edge of the pool and throw them fish? From the Internet

Two elderly women out driving one day came to an intersection. The signal was red, but they just carried on through. The woman in the passenger seat thought to herself, *I must be losing it. I could've sworn we just jumped a red light.*

At the next set of lights, they again sailed on through, and while the woman in the passenger seat was almost certain the light had been red, she was still concerned she might be losing it. At the next intersection,

Two men see a poster outside their police station: "Man Wanted for Armed Robbery in Mumbai." One man says to the other, "Now if that job was in Delhi, I'd take it." B. Lindsay

ILLUSTRATED BY DAN REYNOLDS

sure enough, the light was red and they went on through once more.

At last she turned to her companion and said, "Mildred, we just ran three red lights. You could have killed us!"

Mildred turned to her and said, "You mean I'm driving?"

Michael Sampson

A man sat on a train, chewing gum and staring vacantly across the aisle. Eventually, an old woman sitting opposite him leaned across the gap separating them. "It's no good you speaking to me, young man," she bellowed. "I went deaf years ago!"

Duncan Laurie

A man hates his wife's cat, so he drives it to the next town and leaves it by the side of the road.

Getting home, he finds the cat waiting for him on the doorstep. Again he takes it for a drive, this time leaving it two towns away, and again the cat is waiting for him by the time he gets home. Finally, he bundles the cat into the car and drives three towns away, turning left and right, doubling back and taking back streets until he's sure.

He phones home. His wife answers. "Is the cat there?" he asks.

"Of course," she says. "Why do you ask?"

"Put him on—I'm completely lost."

Amanda Thompson

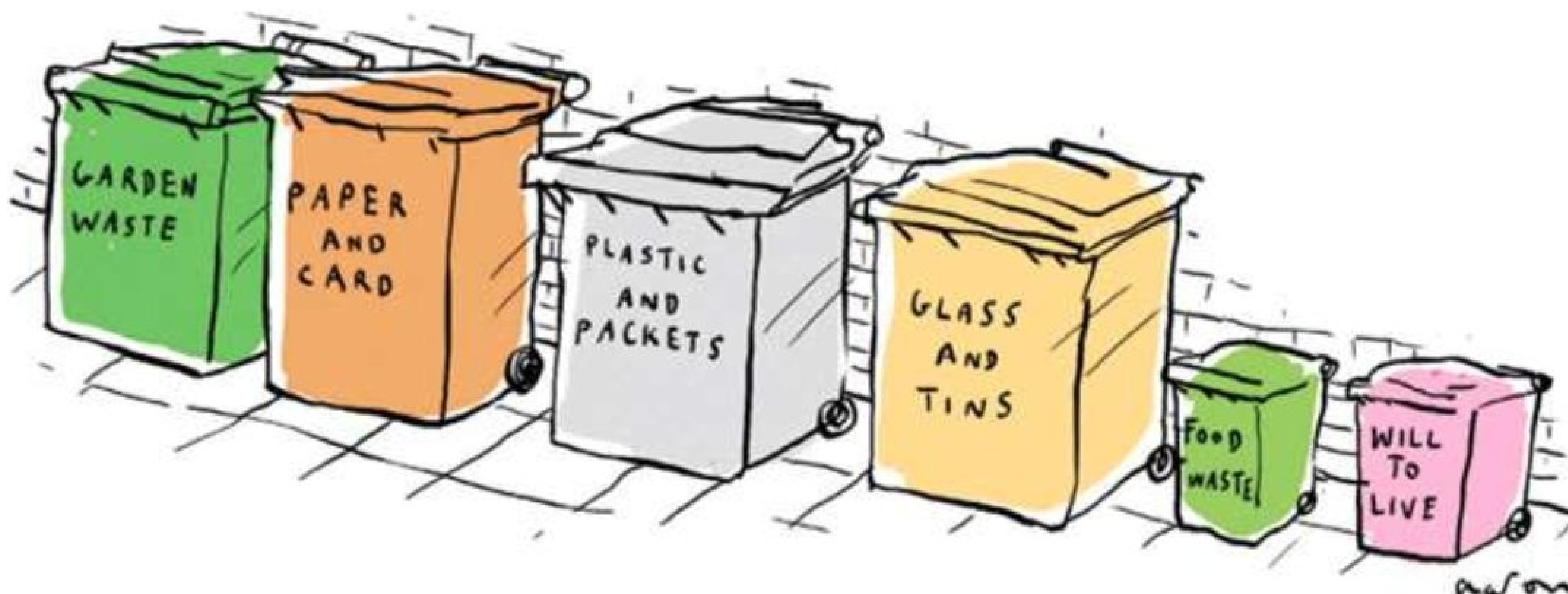
A university rugby coach called out to the new team member, saying: "Look, I'm not supposed to have you on this team because you failed your maths exams. But we really need you, so I'll ask you one simple maths question and if you answer it correctly, I'll sign a slip to say you've passed maths, OK?" The player nodded.

"Right," said the coach. "What's seven times six?" The player wrinkled his forehead and thought for a while, then replied, "Forty-two!"

Immediately all the other team members shouted, "Aw, come on, coach. Give him another chance!"

Felicity Rooney

We will pay for your Laughter anecdote. Post it to the Editorial address or e-mail: editor.india@rd.com



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Get Salon Style Hair at Home, Everyday*

Amidst sharp blacks, pristine whites and glittering mirrors splashed with drama, TRESemmé showcased luxury prêt designer Priyadarshini Rao's "Chair-Worthy Collection" at the Lakme Fashion Week WF 2012 on Day 2. The global haircare brand which recently launched in India made its debut on the ramp through an effervescent display of hairstyles.

From origins in salons in 1947, TRESemmé is driven by a simple truth: every woman deserves to look fabulous, as if she's just stepped out of the salon from a stylist's chair. In line with this, it unveils the secret of runway ready Chair-Worthy hair, making cutting-edge style and hot-off-the-catwalk trends available to women in their own homes.

Bringing "Chair-Worthy" to India, TRESemmé unveiled autumn winter trends in hair as part of the collection. Conceptualized around the theme's runway to realway expression, the amalgamation of Priyadarshini's signature style and TRESemmé's belief took meticulous planning. TRESemmé hairstylist Dharmesh (Dodo) Hingorani said "I share the same belief with TRESemmé that every woman deserves to have salon style hair at home everyday. Thus, the hairstyles that were displayed on the runway were sleek, sexy and those which can be easily recreated at home."

It doesn't take a million dollars
a red carpet or a prince
just a few moments on her throne
a moment of her own gives
a woman CHAIR-WORTHY Hair

"We showcased trends in autumn winter, matched with elegant outfits for the Chair-Worthy TRESemme woman" -Dodo

"The real woman must be able to aspire and achieve the runway looks" -Priyadarshini Rao

Unlocking the secret of the Chair-worthy hair at the show, Dodo gives you a quick lowdown on how you can recreate these styles at home:



Sleek Side Braid

"A side braid can be made by putting your hair on one side, part it into two, start braiding it by taking two sections of hair on each hand and crossing one over the other. Add more hair from the remaining section, as you move down. Contrary to the belief, they can be worn on a night out as well" feels Dodo. "Finish it with a glossing spray"



Braided Ribboned Updo

"Try this for that perfect Sunday brunch with friends. Start by braiding the hair across the hairline adding ribbons as you proceed further. Secure the ends, and then wrap the remaining braided hair into a complete circle at the crown area. Make sure you hold it together by pinning the hair properly & finishing it with a hold spray" says Dodo.



Voluminous Shiny Waves

"Just keep your hair healthy. Use a conditioner to keep it hydrated and a serum to add the shine. All you need for this look is a good blow dry using a volume mousse and a round brush/hot rollers to curl the ends" quips Dodo.

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*With daily use of TRESemmé Shampoo and Conditioner **Smooth and Shine Mask arriving soon

Update—or Join the Losers

Stay abreast with change, or you might think everybody else is wrong

BY MOHAN SIVANAND

From the old birthday rhyme: "The child that is born on the Sabbath day is bonny and blithe, and good and gay."

"*Whaat?*" you may now ask. "Just because it was a Sunday!"

In my college days, *gay* primarily meant cheerful. *Gay* has four meanings in my old 1974 edition of the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (*OALD*): **1.** light-hearted; cheerful... **2.** suggesting happiness... **3.** loose, irresponsible... **4.** (colloquial) homosexual.

Fast-forward to 2012 and the latest *OALD* edition, where the order or importance is upside-down: **1.** (of people, especially men)... homosexual. **2.** [only before noun] connected with people who are gay: a *gay* bar... **3.** boring... **4.** happy and full of fun. Meaning No. 4 is also described as "old-fashioned" usage. How English has changed in my own working life!

A few more examples: *Awesome* was something that frightened you (maybe an erupting volcano). Now it means very good (like a tasty sandwich). The same thing happened in the 19th century to *terrific*, which originally meant "filled with terror." *Faculty* was a group of academic departments or teachers (also known as *members of the faculty*). But today (in Mumbai) I often hear, "He is a faculty at our college." *Invite* was always a verb (you couldn't send an *invite*, you sent an *invitation*). I was told to avoid *But* at the start of a sentence. But that's perfectly okay now. Rekha used to be an actress, as were a lot of other Bollywood ladies. Now they're all actors. And I



ILLUSTRATED BY MULTIVISION GRAPHICS

might say, "Every actor loves *their* job." (Don't complain, I've just used the "gender-neutral singular *their*" and avoided the clumsy *"his or her."*)



You have to keep up with such changes—or you might think much of what you hear or read is wrong.

In March 2010, Reader's Digest ran an international cover story with the title "Who Do You Trust?" after we carried out online polls in Australia, South Africa, Singapore, Canada and India—all former colonies where English thrives.

Should we have used *Whom?* We debated it during a teleconference on the article among senior Digest editors in some of those countries and the consensus was that *Whom,* if used here, would make us sound stuffy and academic. So we deliberately chose *Who.* A few years ago, we might all have lost our jobs. But *whom* is now old-fashioned in many circles, and may soon vanish just the way *thou* did.

Editors taking such a decision—one way change comes about in the language of Milton, Shakespeare and The Digest. And who else can you trust to set such changes in motion? Youngsters, bloggers, musicians ("Who do you love?" Bo Diddley / Rolling Stones), but not your average English teacher, although anyone who graduated with English should have learnt that a living language must keep changing, or else it is dead.

The anti-hopefully brigade. I was once told to avoid that most positive of words: *Hopefully*, which roughly means "we hope something will happen." I couldn't understand the logic, since nobody complained about starting a line with similar words like *Regrettably* or *Fortunately*. But *Hopefully* (used as in "Hopefully, we'll get there by lunchtime") arrived late into English, only in the 1960s. One professor even started the Anti-Hopefully Society, maintaining that people who go about saying "hopefully" should be informed of that terrible error. Nobody cared for him, and anyone who wanted to say "Hopefully, ..." did so with impunity. Older dictionaries warn you about the usage. "... it is still considered incorrect by some people," warns my 1995

Concise Oxford Dictionary.

Meanwhile, the new *Longman's Dictionary of Contemporary English* has no such warning. It also has some entries in red, denoting the most commonly used words in the language. Words like **immediately**, **never** and **hopefully**.

Grammarians who objected explained that while adverbs such as *regretfully* and *fortunately* can be converted to the form "it is regrettable that" or "it is fortunate that," *hopefully* could not be converted to "it is hopable that." How silly!

Why convert? Why bother about stodgy grammarians? Just say *Hopefully*... when you want to. It's free.

That best-selling Reader's Digest book *How to Write and Speak Better* has the last word on *Hopefully*: "The only reason to avoid it is to wish not to sound illiterate in the ears of traditionalists."

Corrupting Shakespeare. You can't win against the slow and steady power of a living, changing language. As long as our needs change, there will be new words spoken, new grammatical "mistakes" and new ways of using old words. Many of them will slip into writing or print as well, sometimes with new short forms.

So your best bet is to understand new usage (check new dictionaries or use an online resource like *dictionary.com*) and stop complaining about the "bad, incorrect, faulty, improper English young people use these days." It's those young people who always win by the time they are older and complaining about the next generation of young people murdering the language.

Most of us can't understand much of Shakespeare without footnotes or teachers, primarily because English has been "corrupted" since his day. Go back another 200 years and you'll find Chaucer's language even more incomprehensible. Take his first line from *The Canterbury Tales*: "Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote..." [Modern corruption: "When April with its sweet showers..."]. Let's rewind yet another 200 years and try to read this purest form of written English from the epic *Beowulf*, another famous first line: "Hwæt! We Gardena in geardagum,..." *

Can't understand good Old English, huh? Neither can I. Centuries of abuse by ignorant youngsters (and editors) contributed to the English you could follow easily when you watched *Beowulf*, the recent movie.

Finally, let's return to the present day and this SMS, also in English: "onnta! pls hoas m8, ive pos rn. brb." **

You think you can stop that trend? Im rofl.

* Lo, praise of the prowess of people-kings...
** Oh, no, not this again. Please hold on a second, mate. I have parent over shoulder right now. Be right back.

Do you update your English? Any interesting anecdotes you have to share on the subject? Write to us: editor.india@rd.com

Word Power

BY EMILY COX & HENRY RATHVON



Shoptalk Before you start haggling over prices, master this array of market phrases. Done dealing? **Answers on the next page.**

1. meretricious (mer-eh-'tri-shis) *adj.*—A: falsely or tawdrily attractive. B: eager to sell. C: worth more over time.

2. bodega (bo-'day-gah) *n.*—A: bookstore. B: barbershop. C: wineshop.

3. queue up ('kyu 'up) *v.*—A: add sales tax. B: form a line. C: overspend.

4. haberdasher ('ha-ber-da-sher) *n.*—A: pushy salesman. B: dealer in menswear. C: mender of shoes.

5. caveat emptor ('ka-vee-aht 'emp-ter) *n.*—A: "Let the buyer beware." B: "Everything must go." C: "First come, first served."

6. patronize ('pay-tre-niyz) *v.*—A: visit as a customer. B: put up sale signs. C: argue.

7. mercantile ('mer-ken-tiyl) *adj.*—A: spending freely. B: using false tactics. C: of buying and selling.

8. haute couture ('oht ku-'tur) *n.*—A: pots and pans. B: high fashion. C: bicycle shop.

9. millinery ('mi-le-nar-ee) *n.*—A: women's hats. B: grains and flours. C: paper goods.

10. floorwalker ('flor-wawker) *n.*—A: browser who never buys. B: shoplifter. C: roving sales supervisor.

11. charcuterie (shar-ku-te-'ree) *n.*—A: café curtains. B: hair salon. C: deli specializing in meats.

12. estaminet (e-stah-mee-'nay) *n.*—A: price drop. B: small café. C: shopping spree.

13. chaffer ('cha-fer) *v.*—A: haggle. B: advertise aggressively. C: hoard.

14. defray (di-'fray) *v.*—A: lose value. B: provide payment for. C: offset.

15. monger ('mun- or 'mon-ger) *n.*—A: broker or dealer. B: cheapskate. C: dishonest merchant.

Check This Out.

If someone gets **cashiered**, he's been fired or dishonourably dismissed. As a verb, *cashier* comes from the Dutch *casseren* ("to cast off") and the French *casser* ("to discharge"); it's also related to *quash* ("to suppress, extinguish"). But a different French root gives us the clerk we call a cashier: *cassier*, which is from *casse*, or "money box."

ILLUSTRATED BY EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

Answers

1. meretricious—*[A]* falsely or tawdrily attractive. That skirt is flattering, I suppose, if not a little *meretricious*.

2. bodega—*[C]* wineshop. Sipping sangria in the *bodega* doorway, Jigna dreamed of Venice.

3. queue up—*[B]* form a line. We've got 300 jumpy people *queued up* for just five discount iPads!

4. haberdasher—*[B]* dealer in menswear. I think Anil gets his suits from the *haberdasher* around the corner.

5. caveat emptor—*[A]* "Let the buyer beware." At the altar, pastor John should have put a *caveat emptor* sign on my husband!

6. patronize—*[A]* visit as a customer. One more snide look from that clerk, and I'm going to stop *patronizing* this store.

7. mercantile—*[C]* of buying and selling. Will has been in the *mercantile* trade since his first comic book swap.



8. haute couture—*[B]* high fashion. Ray seems to think that flip-flops and bib overalls are *haute couture*.

9. millinery—*[A]* women's hats. The price tag put an end to Chanda's search for a trademark piece of *millinery*.

10. floorwalker—*[C]* roving sales supervisor. Our new *floorwalker* may as well be a mannequin for all the help he offers.

11. charcuterie—*[C]* deli specializing in meats. We can't make our special sandwich until dad gets back from the *charcuterie*.

12. estaminet—*[B]* small café. Looking for a killer cup of coffee? Try the *estaminet* next to the railway station.

13. chaffer—*[A]* haggle. Twenty minutes of *chaffering*, and you got the price reduced by just thirty rupees?

14. defray—*[B]* provide payment for. For some 15 years, Mallav's parents have *defrayed* the cost of his rent.

15. monger—*[A]* broker or dealer. If you're looking for a good olive oil, try the Italian *monger* downtown.

VOCABULARY RATINGS

- **9 and below: Sticker price**
- **10–12: Sweet deal**
- **13–15: Real steal**

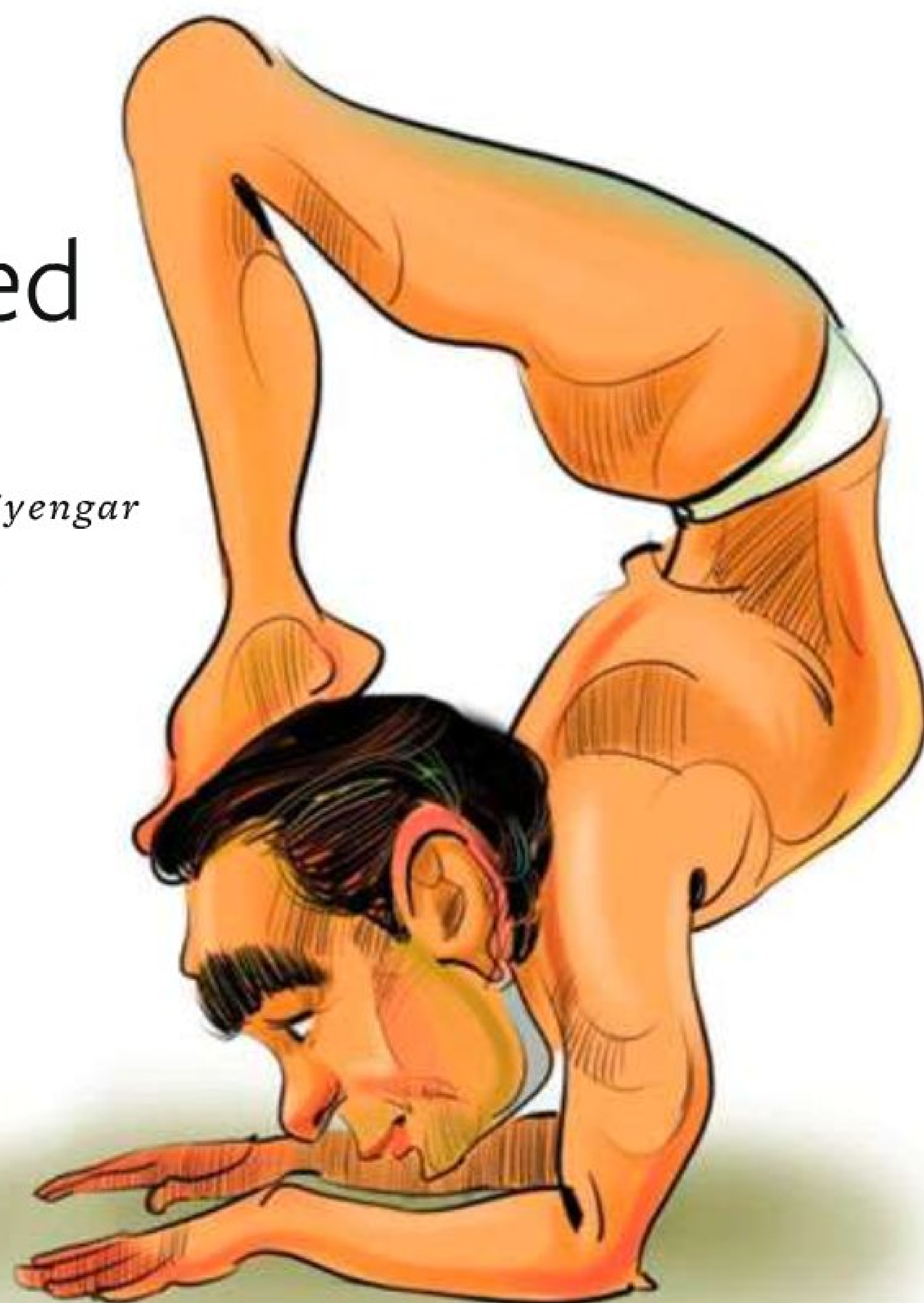
Challenge a friend to beat your score in our online game at readersdigest.com/wordpowergame

Sound Smarter.

When you drastically improve something (say, your job performance, tennis game, or cooking skills), give yourself due credit: You've pulled a **180-degree turnaround,** not a 360-degree one. Logically speaking, 360 degrees would take you back full circle to square one—and right past your newfound success.

Quotable Quotes

Yoga helps endure what cannot be cured and cure what need not be endured. *B.K.S. Iyengar*



A teacher affects eternity. He can never tell where his influence stops.

Henry Adams

Don't compromise, even if it hurts to be yourself. *Toby Keith*

That's the great paradox of living on this earth, that in the midst of great pain, you can have great joy as well.

Kathy Mattea

To succeed in life, you need three things: a wishbone, a backbone, and a funny bone. *Reba McEntire*

If you don't like the road you're walking, start paving another one. *Dolly Parton*

The greatest conflicts are not between two people but between one person and himself. *Garth Brooks*

When you feel anxious face the sun and the shadows will slip behind. *Jan Werich*

People think you can only enjoy food if you eat it slowly. Well, I'm here to tell you that it tastes just as good when you eat it fast. *Miranda Lambert,* in *Texas Monthly*

Nothing tests your ethics like selling a used car. *Linda Holland,* in *The New York Times*

We create our own misery and unhappiness. The purpose of suffering is to make us understand we are the ones who cause it. *Willie Nelson*

ILLUSTRATED BY UDAY MOHITE



!n My Opinion

BY RAJIV WAGH

Do We Need a President?

An advocate ponders the role of our first citizen

Even as Mr Pranab Mukherjee has assumed charge as our 13th President, the debate among some citizens as to whether we really need the office of President continues.

There is undoubtedly a disconnect between people at large and India's first citizen. The President is perceived as a remote entity, a titular head of state, living in splendid isolation amid pomp and luxury at public expense, and as one who has little to show by way of public service. In recent memory, the only one who sought to break this image with some measure of success has been President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam who put forward his vision of what India should be and generally went out of the way to be accessible.



Bombay High Court advocate Rajiv Wagh, 53, is a former *Times of India* journalist.

Our Constitution envisages the President to be the living embodiment of our republic; the single most important unifying factor. He or she is supposed to stand above the heat and din of day-to-day politics and uphold the grand principles embodied in the Constitution in an impartial, non-partisan manner. Every country has its own equivalent of our President. Today, the British monarch has even less powers than our President has, but Queen Elizabeth and the monarchy are still revered by a majority of her subjects.

Our President belongs to all citizens, so he has to remain above controversy. It is the duty of the Prime Minister to keep the President informed of decisions taken by the cabinet relating to the administration of the Union and all proposals for legislation. The President can also draw the attention of the cabinet to any decision taken by an individual

YASBANT NEGI/INDIA TODAY IMAGES

minister. The President does not administer the nation but his advice has the power of moral persuasion and has to be given due respect. Such advice must remain private. Therefore, much of the important work done by a President remains outside the realm of media attention and public knowledge.

Our Constitution's founding fathers gave considerable thought to this high office. The only issue over which there were differences was whether or not the President should normally function in accordance with advice given by the council of ministers headed by the PM, or whether the President should have independent authority to exercise individual discretion. The founding fathers finally came to the conclusion: If we were to have a British-model parliamentary democracy, it would not be possible to arm our President with independent authority as in, say, the US system. Our founding fathers realized that there could not be two centres of authority, namely the President and the PM. That is why our President is sometimes called a "rubber stamp" even though he is not exactly that.

We would better appreciate the importance of the President if we consider some recent history. On 12th June 1975 came the judgment of the Allahabad High Court, holding that Mrs Indira Gandhi had indulged in unfair practices during the 1971 Lok Sabha elections. Justice Jagmohan Lal Sinha unseated the Prime Minister and barred her from contesting elections for six years.

Veteran Gandhian Jaiprakash "JP" Narayan called upon Mrs Gandhi to resign and even advised the armed forces and the police to not obey unconstitutional orders from the government. Mrs Gandhi should probably have resigned, advised the President to call for fresh elections and challenged the High Court's judgment in the Supreme Court. Instead, she heeded the advice of people like her son Sanjay and Siddhartha Shankar Ray, then West Bengal chief minister, to embark upon the undemocratic and disastrous course of imposing an internal emergency. The nation was on the path to self-destruction.

Only the President could have saved India from disaster then, since he is the ultimate custodian of our Constitutional values. Yet President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed failed the nation, because he mutely signed the proclamation of emergency and plunged the nation into darkness. He did not tell Mrs Gandhi that she could not impose the emergency merely to save her job, and that she had to at least get the approval of her cabinet before she presented the proclamation to him for signature in the dead of night. The emergency and its excesses became a reality and the rest is history. If only we had as our President an individual of character who could stand up for the larger national interest,



Mrs Gandhi could have been prevented from throttling the Constitution. There can come occasions when an entire nation misses the script as it happened in the 1970s. The role of the President is then very crucial.

The issue therefore is not whether we need the office of President. We do. The real challenge is to get a President who will stand by the highest Constitutional values without fear of the party in power, which has been instrumental in getting him elected or selected, and one who reaches out to the people in ways big and small. One remembers with shame the statement made by Giani Zail Singh soon after becoming President: "If my leader had said I should pick up a broom and be a sweeper, I would have done that. She chose me to be President." The Giani (who gave him that title?), who was referring to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, really missed the point of being President.

On the other hand, President K.R. Narayanan showed considerable courage and sagacity when he refused to dismiss the Kalyan Singh government in UP in 1997 and the Rabri Devi government in Bihar in 1998. And President Kalam is on record for stating that he wanted to visit Gujarat after the 2002 riots during which a large number of people from a minority community were killed, allegedly with the encouragement of the state machinery.

There is no way that our President can personally reach out to even a sizable number of our 1.2 billion citizenry. But, surely, ways can be found by the President's office and the government to increase the general visibility of the President. The media too has a role in highlighting the President's responsibility. There is no doubt that some steps have been taken in recent times to reduce the chasm that exists between the occupant of the majestic Rashtrapati Bhavan and the people.

That needs to be further undertaken. But we must resist the temptation of throwing out the baby with the bath water.

Do you agree with the author that India needs a President? How can the President reach out more to citizens? Write to editor.india@rd.com

Lemon Essence

An enduring love made the tree bloom, while friendship shared its flavours

BY VERONICA DAYMAN

It sat like a beacon in the middle of the driveway. A shiny blue bucket filled with bright yellow, unblemished lemons. A handwritten sign, propped against the bucket, invited: "Free Lemons—please take some."

I took two of the luscious lemons, but it was the simple act of generosity from this kind neighbour that lifted my spirits and stayed with me for hours afterwards. On impulse, I sat and wrote a note of thanks, on my prettiest stationery, in my best handwriting. I did not include my name or address. When I next walked past "the lemon house," as I had come to call it, I dropped my note in the letterbox.

The following week there was a letter to the editor in the local newspaper titled "Lemons Sweet Treat." It read: "This season I had an abundance of lemons and, rather than see them wasted, I put them in a bucket on my front verge with a 'Please take some' notice. A few days later I received a lovely handwritten note thanking me for the lemons and acknowledging my kindness—no name, no address. The note was totally unexpected but much appreciated. Through this newspaper I would very much like to thank this anonymous person for making my day."

I knew intuitively that this message was from my neighbour. It warmed my heart that such a simple exchange of kindness had resulted in such a powerful experience for both of us.

I walked past the house every day and it never failed to lift my spirits. One day, I noticed a petite, elderly lady standing by the letterbox. We exchanged smiles and

Veronica Dayman is married with two children, and lives and works in Albany, Western Australia. Her ambition is to become a successful professional writer one day.



MASTERFILE INDIA

I said hello. She commented on what a beautiful day it was, I complimented her on her beautiful house and garden. "My late husband designed and built this house," she said. "Gardening was Bill's passion. Since he died last year, I've had to employ a gardener to keep everything in order." She chuckled softly, "I can just hear him saying, 'Grace, don't you let my garden go to ruin'."

She paused and looked around her, "It always feels like Bill is still with me when I'm out here in his garden."

I was grateful my eyes were shielded behind sunglasses as I was furiously blinking back tears. I wanted to identify myself to this lovely lady, to tell her that I was the author of the anonymous letter. But I didn't and I couldn't explain why.

The following week, I noticed more activity at the house; cars coming and going. Days later, I was alarmed to see a removal truck parked in the driveway. A middle-aged, immaculately dressed woman was outside the house speaking on her phone. As I approached, I heard her say, "Mum would never have wanted me to sell this house, and to be honest I can't bring myself to part with it either."

She turned back towards the house and I couldn't hear the remainder of her conversation but I felt a grim foreboding that something had happened to Grace.

I waited until the woman had finished her call, then asked, "Excuse me for intruding, but is Grace OK?" The pain reflected in the woman's eyes was palpable as she softly said, "My mother passed away peacefully in her sleep last week."

"I'm so sorry for your loss," I said. The news of Grace's death saddened me more than I would have expected, and I was momentarily lost for words. To fill the awkward silence, I told Grace's daughter the story of the lemons. "So that was you!" she exclaimed, "Mum told me about the letter... You'd be amazed how much it meant to her!"

I attended Grace's funeral, and met other members of her family and friends. Through their memories, I gained a deeper insight into the special person that was my "lemon lady."

Since that day I have developed a very close friendship with Grace's daughter, Sarah, and because Sarah had no desire to sell her parents' home, I arranged to rent it from her.



Veronica will never forget Grace's simple generosity.

I now live in the wonderful aura of "the lemon house," surrounded by the essence of Grace. I tend to Bill's garden lovingly. Every year, when the lemon tree produces its magnificent fruit, I put out a shiny blue bucket filled with luscious lemons on the front verge, with a handwritten sign that invites my neighbours to "Please take some—in memory of Grace and Bill."

My Story is a regular feature about moving, challenging or amusing personal experiences beyond the call of daily life. We pay ₹6000 if your story is published. If you'd like to contribute a story, send it to: editor.india@rd.com

If there are no stupid questions, then what kind of questions do stupid people ask? Do they get smart just in time to ask questions? *Scott Adams*

Humour IN UNIFORM

When I was a convoy commander in Iraq, my radio call signal was Rolling Thunder Five. Eventually I shortened it and would just state, "This is Thunder Five. Over." But I went back to using my full call sign a few days later after an honest sergeant clued me in to something.

"You know, ma'am," he said, "it sounds like you're saying, 'This is Thunder Thighs' over the radio." *L. Weldin*



Blue bulls (nil-ghai) in the forested area of our Air Force station were a big flight-safety concern—what if one suddenly come on the runway during a landing or take-off? Efforts to deter them had not been successful, and their numbers were multiplying. The subject finally came up for discussion at a headquarters flight safety conference, after which one wise guy wrote to our air officer commanding (AOC) to place tiger droppings around the airfield to scare the bulls away.

"G-great!" said the AOC, looking flabbergasted. "But where do I order this dung from?"

Air Commander (retd) D.K. Bhatt, Delhi

Pulling guard duty is dull work. But I never realized just how dull until one night when, with nothing else to do, I looked underneath my desk. There I found these words scrawled by a predecessor: Man, you must really be bored!

Michael Bielarski

I was part of a team of highly trained Army officers trying to get through an unseasonably warm winter. The nature of our work required stringent security measures that made the heat far worse in our tent. We did everything to cool off while maintaining security: rearranged desks, moved chairs ... but nothing worked. We were still sweating through our uniforms.

Finally, after much consideration, one officer had this brilliant suggestion: "Why don't we turn off the heater?" *Chris Heatherly*

SOLVING THE BACK PROBLEM

Debilitating back pain is common, even among young people. The best treatment could be simpler than you realize

BY SHIVANI MAHESHWARI

Varsha Kaur has had an incapacitating back pain for months and she's surprised. Recently, she found something that worked better than anything else for her. But it's not a well-known treatment and not many people get it.

It's as yet not widely practised in India, doctors will tell you. In fact, Varsha*, a Mumbai schoolteacher, came upon it just by chance, and it's a sad state of affairs that it seems to be the best-kept secret in back-pain treatment. Varsha took innumerable rounds of strong painkillers. And check-ups with two doctors, one of them a neurologist, brought no relief. The severe pain compelled her to stop work and stay home. She began to think of surgery. That's when, more than five months into her troubles, a friend suggested a six-week rehabilitation course.

This treatment combines well-known physical and psychological approaches and doesn't involve anything high-tech or unusual. Even its name is dull: *functional rehabilitation*. Varsha decided to try it out.

After a thorough examination, Dr Abhishek Srivastava, consultant physiatrist and director, Centre for

* Name changed for privacy.

Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at Kokilaben Dhirubhai Ambani Hospital, Mumbai, put Varsha on the program. First, medication was started to reduce muscle spasms and anxiety. Physiotherapy included muscle stretching and strengthening exercises. Counselling and supportive therapy to improve physiological wellbeing was done, along with education about the cause of pain and strategies for pain prevention. The importance of good posture was explained to Varsha and she was advised to take frequent breaks and change body positions during her normal daily activities. Strengthening exercises were incorporated for both upper and lower back. She was also trained in stress management techniques.

"By the end of six weeks of functional rehabilitation provided by our team comprising physiatrist, physical and occupational therapists and psychologist, she was pain-free and able to resume her normal life," says Dr Srivastava. "With each of them explaining matters, and helping out, there's a high level of involvement from the patient."

Indeed, studies maintain that up to 85 percent of patients suffering from low back pain have no known causes—one reason why the multidisciplinary approach offered by functional rehabilitation is effective.

Functional rehabilitation is better established in the developed countries. Australia's National Health and Medical Research Council published



SCOTT CAMAZINE / ALAMY

PRACTICAL STEPS TO TACKLE BACK PAIN

It's worth making a serious effort to control your pain with exercise. This is the best solution because it strengthens the muscles and ligaments that support the spine.

One major British trial—the Back and Exercise Manipulation study in 2004—found people who took regular exercise (up to eight one-hour sessions over one or two months) had less pain than those following standard GP care. The most popular options include:

Yoga Not the more intense forms, which could make things worse. It's worth checking if the teacher has had specific experience of people with back pain.

Pilates Originally developed for dancers. Strengthens the three main muscles in your trunk that surround the area in which low-back pain develops.

Alexander Technique Helps you unlearn bad posture habits and so relieves the pressure they can put on the spine.

ADAPTED FROM AN ARTICLE BY JEROME BURNE, ADDITIONS BY MAMTA SHARMA

guidelines for the management of acute lower back pain a decade ago. It recommended that staying active, heat therapy and patient education provided the greatest benefits to people with lower back conditions. All are essential tenets of functional rehabilitation. In 2009, Britain's National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence went further, recommending that functional rehabilitation was the best treatment available for serious back pain, over and above the widely available treatments involving drugs or surgery.

As well as conventional physical treatments such as physiotherapy and exercise, the new approach includes cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) to help patients handle their fears about back pain. It's also cheaper than other treatments and there's no risk of further damage or infection.

Eddie Pratt, head of a green products company in the UK, who was cured after suffering severe back pain for decades, explains how it helps: "There were about 50 of us and we were immediately struck by the benefit of sharing our experiences. Being in serious pain can be very lonely; you don't have any way of gauging how well you're doing. Suddenly, I was being inspired by those who were worse off than me and coping brilliantly."

The program gave Pratt and the others techniques for negotiating daily pitfalls—ways of avoiding the agonizing pain that can result if you brush your teeth or get out of bed the wrong way. Each day there was also an increasing amount of exercise and physiotherapy.

"The trainers were brilliant at getting you to set goals and push yourself," says Pratt. "You learnt that you didn't have to avoid things just because they hurt."

Afterwards, Pratt was able to go back to work and, although not completely pain-free, he has been able to travel and play games.

The reality of lower back pain is that surgery isn't necessarily the solution. "In 95 percent of cases, symptoms resolve within three days to three weeks with no treatment," says Dr Ashish Diwan, chief of the Spine Service at St George Hospital, Sydney, Australia. "It is only when pain is persistent beyond three months that intervention is called for and the pain relabelled 'chronic'."

At Ambani Hospital's Centre for Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation in Mumbai, a range of non-surgical treatments are used to help ease the pain of lower back conditions. These include activity-maintenance advice, pain medication, pain counselling, social support, gym-based progressive strengthening and behavioural therapy. That's because chronic back pain patients may be scared of damaging themselves further. Rehabilitation shows them that it's OK to move and exercise, and helps them regain control. Treating the psychological side of chronic back pain helps improve a patient's confidence in their body, and can have a big impact on their ability to cope with pain. The holistic

SIMPLE EXERCISES YOU CAN DO AT HOME

When you no longer have acute pain, try these gentle exercises from health website *Revolution Health*, which should help you recover faster and lessen the chance of it returning. Stop the exercise if you experience any pain.

If the pain eases when you stand or walk, try these two exercises to stretch tissues along the front of the spine and strengthen the back muscles.

1 Get onto the floor on your hands and knees; tighten your stomach muscles. Raise one leg off the floor and hold it straight out behind you: hold for five seconds, then lower your leg and switch to the other leg. Repeat eight to 12 times on each leg.



2 Lie on your stomach with your hands under your shoulders. Push with your hands so your shoulders begin to lift off the floor. If it's comfortable, put your elbows on the floor directly under your shoulders so you can rest in this position for several seconds.

If your pain eases when you're sitting, try these two exercises to strengthen the stomach and stretch muscles and ligaments in the back.

3 Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor; bring one knee to your chest, keeping the other foot flat on the floor. Keep your lower back pressed to the floor. Hold for at least 15 to 30 seconds. Repeat two to four times with each leg.

4 Lie on your back with knees bent at a 90-degree angle and feet flat on the floor, about 12 inches from your buttocks. Cross arms over chest. Raise your shoulder blades off the floor. Keep your head in line with your body—don't press your chin to your chest. Hold for one or two seconds, then slowly lower yourself back down. Repeat eight to 12 times.

AVOID THESE EXERCISES: Straight-leg sit-ups; lifting both legs while lying on your back; lifting heavy weights above the waist; toe touches while standing.

BETH BISCHOFF

approach also helps with anxiety and depression.

"It has been scientifically proven that in more than 80 percent of patients suffering from low back pain, a poor or unhappy psychological condition multiplies pain and complicates the condition profusely," says Dr S. Vidyadhara, consultant spine surgeon at Bangalore's Manipal Hospital. "Unfortunately, most doctors gloss over CBT or psychotherapeutic intervention for pain management. In India, doctors often don't have the time to listen to or counsel patients as they see a huge number of outpatients. Most back-pain patients are taught some basic back-strengthening exercises in addition to the painkillers and anti-depressants prescribed. But the treatment pattern is gradually changing towards holistic medicine, with the combined involvement of spine surgeons, neuropsychologists, pain specialists and

specialists in physical medicine and rehabilitation."

"Of those seeking treatment for musculoskeletal disorders, nearly 70 percent suffer from neck and lower back pain," adds Kamal Kishore, head of the physiotherapy department at the Asian Institute of Medical Sciences, Faridabad.

It's no wonder that an increasing number of men and women suffer from debilitating back pain at some point in their lives due to bad posture, stress, lack of exercise, insufficient calcium or just a sedentary life. The ailment is usually observed in people who are aged 30 or above, but could even strike a 20-year-old. According to a study published in the *American Journal of Industrial Medicine*, more people in Canada, Finland and the US are disabled from working as a result of musculoskeletal disorders—especially back pain—than from any other group of diseases. Experts estimate that the lifetime prevalence of an episode of significant lower back pain is 60 to 90 percent. One study published by a group of doctors from the Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences, Rohtak, Haryana, reported that over 23 percent of the 11,234 outpatients they interviewed had lower back pain, and of them 67 percent had psychological issues.

"The leading causes of back pain are poor ergonomics, poor abdominal and lower back muscle tone and flawed posture," adds Physiotherapist Kamal Kishore. "Correct these and incorporate some lifestyle changes, and back pain becomes curable."

"To understand functional rehabilitation one must first understand chronic nonspecific lumbar [back] pain," says Dr Shreedhar Archik, consultant orthopedic surgeon with several leading hospitals in Mumbai. "A large number of patients with back pain who see a doctor have no specific cause for the pain—investigations do not point to a diagnosis and test-results usually are normal." So the multidisciplinary approach works, since an orthopedic surgeon alone cannot treat them.

Dr Archik has more solutions. "We need to introduce 'back schools' in India, as in the US," he adds. "Back schools are centres where patients with similar complaints mingle while training and learning back postures. There are tiny back schools run by individual spine surgeons in India but even these are very few. We also have a shortage of counsellors. We do not have enough practitioners of CBT either. That too needs to change."

It may not sound as serious as cancer or stroke, but there is something heart-wrenching about those with chronic back pain. Like Varsha Kaur, sufferers often have to stop going to work. As the condition aggravates, some may have problems with their partners or become depressed. The new rehabilitation approach may not be a sure-fire cure for everybody, but it can get patients back on their feet and make them happier and functioning again. ■

Life!

LIFE'S LIKE THAT



"I want him to stay alert."

Everyone has cows in their life. Cows at home. Cows at work. Cows in our families. Cows can take over everything. But how do we get rid of the cows?

Teacher: Chaos. It's pronounced "kay-os."

overheardeverywhere.com

Overheard:

Mom: You're 18. You can do what you want.

Daughter: So I can run away!?

Mom: No. You're 18. You would just be leaving.

Daughter: Oh.

Laura Morrison

We were at a party when Akshita, my two-year-old, saw another kid sipping some apple juice from a tetrapack. "I too want that!" she demanded, and the host readily handed her a pack. Hoping to teach my daughter to say thank you, I prompted, "What should you say to Uncle now?"

Fiddling with the pack, she looked up and asked the host, "Open this?"

Om Khaitan, Mumbai

After I hurt my back, my physiotherapist showed me how to use a machine that sent electrical impulses to the injured area. One day at the clinic I was puzzled not to feel anything when I turned up the level on my machine. I leaned over in my stretcher and kept twisting the knobs. Still nothing.

Suddenly the guy next to me shot out of his stretcher with a blood-curdling scream. To my horror, I discovered I had been raising his level the entire time.

Debra Morin

I asked my three-year-old what she liked to eat. "Nuts," she replied.

"Great," I said. "What kind? Pecans? Walnuts? Peanuts?"

"Donuts," she said. *B.L.*

A new boy, recently arrived in the US, presenting for speech class:

ILLUSTRATED BY CONAN DEVRIES; TAMIKA COLTER/SIGNSPOTTING.COM

Believe it or not, I received an insurance cheque for just one rupee. Why, I don't know, but concerned that some arcane regulation—complete with penalty—would apply for not cashing a government cheque, I took it to the bank. The teller looked at the amount, checked the endorsement, and then asked, "How would you like this, heads or tails?" *Sheldon Levitas*

One Saturday morning, my family and I went out for lunch. After we ate, my father gave my uncle ₹300 for a pizza he'd bought us the night before. My uncle didn't want to seem greedy, so he refused to take the money. Likewise, my dad refused to keep the money. They eventually made a scene in the parking lot by trying to stuff the cash into each other's pockets. A man walked out of a nearby bank and watched them for a few moments before offering, "I'll take it!" *Mustafa Nauman*

I recently went on an excursion near Cozumel, Mexico, with two cordial young local men as our guides. Upon our arrival, the first guide assisted us off the boat while the second greeted each guest personally. He asked one of the men ahead of me for his name, which was Rob.

"Here in Mexico, you are called Roberto!" said the guide with a flourish.

The next guest to disembark was named Miles. The guide said, "Here, you are called Kilometres!" *Lori Hallet*

CAN I, IF I'M BURNING?



I was at a parent-teacher interview with my son Asad's 9th standard maths instructor. He mentioned that in one instance Asad had copied the answers from the back of the book instead of working through the problems.

"How did you infer this?" I asked.

The teacher smiled, then apologized and said, "You see, for one of his solutions he wrote, 'Answers may vary' just as it says at the back of the book." *Hamid Ahmad*

I got 85 percent on my very first university English paper. While the professor was impressed with my work, she said she had deducted a few marks for a spelling error. After several readings, I couldn't find my mistake. Preparing to challenge the professor, I stood up and stopped flipping through my assignment. There, on the front cover, was a red circle around my misspelt name. *Lucinda Rajaselvan*

For Your anecdote in "Life!" could be worth ₹1000. Post it to the Editorial address or e-mail: editor.india@rd.com

Mednews



UPDATES FROM THE WORLD OF MEDICINE



UNITED STATES

A Device That Predicts Heart Attacks

A coin-size implant that is placed under the skin near the left shoulder, the AngelMed Guardian may help identify a heart attack quickly by monitoring the heart's electrical activity for unusual patterns, potentially before the wearer notices any symptoms. If the implant detects a problem, it will vibrate, and a portable pager will sound an alarm and flash a warning light. It's approved for sale in Brazil and Europe, and the manufacturer will seek United States FDA approval within a year.

Angel Medical Systems, Shrewsbury, New Jersey, USA

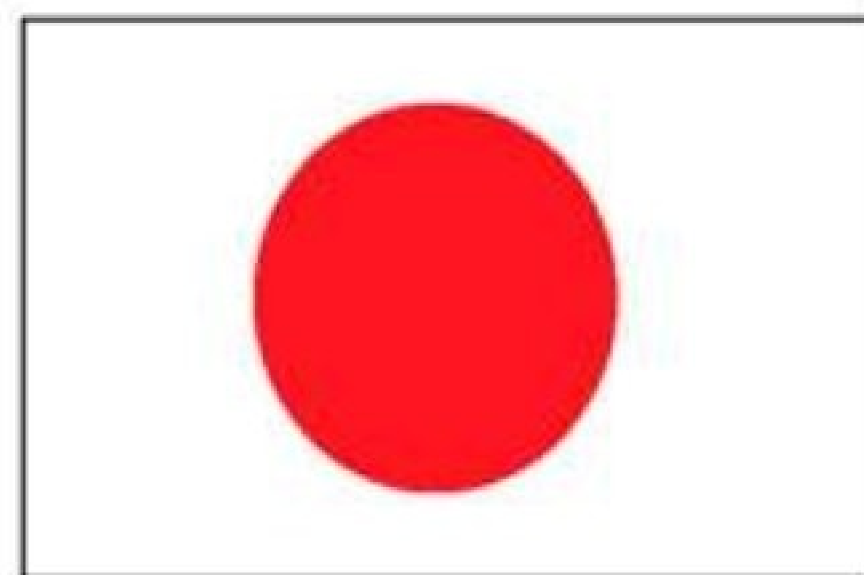


GERMANY

Smarter Hip Implant

Many hip implants are metal, which requires extra care during surgical implantation and can cause problems if parts grind against each other and release particles that may cause inflammation and damage organs. Now researchers have developed a metal-free alternative, a special blend of plastics. The pins that hold the two pieces in place are made of bone mineral (not metal or cement). In early tests, a robot simulated walking up and down stairs. The hip may reach the market within five years.

Fraunhofer Institute for Manufacturing Engineering and Automation IPA, Stuttgart, Germany



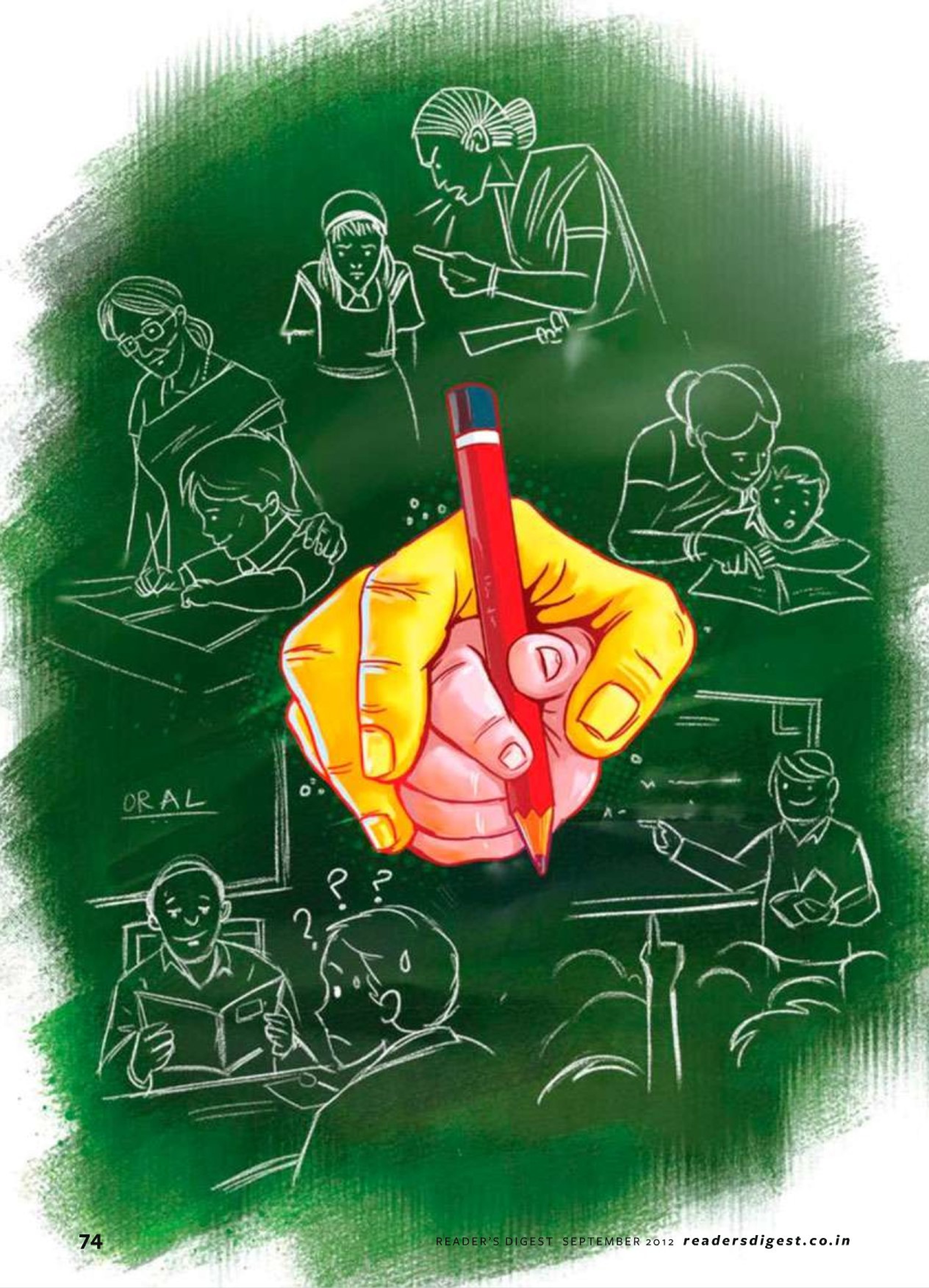
JAPAN

Stem Cell Cure for Baldness

Scientists have grown hair on bald mice using stem cells collected near the mice's whiskers (so embryos aren't necessary). The hair strands grew back even after being plucked and were able to rise into goose bumps as normal hair does. If it proves successful in humans, the therapy could replace current hair-loss treatments (such as hair transplantation surgery and topical medicine like minoxidil) for male-pattern baldness. Researchers hope to start clinical trials in humans within three to five years.

Takashi Tsuji, Research Institute for Science and Technology at the Tokyo University of Science, Japan

Turn to page 131 and find out how well are we Indians (including you) taking care of our health.


ORAL

Beyond Books & Homework

What do the best teachers really teach? Three answers for Teacher's Day

SISTER ACT

BY SAMRUDHI DASH

I was in the ninth standard at St Joseph's High School, Bhubaneswar, when I began to suffer pangs of depression. My parents noticed, but felt that since I had always been a responsible girl and a good student, this was just a temporary phase.

Unfortunately, that was not to be. I didn't have many friends. I could never share my problems. A deep insecurity shattered my self-confidence. Soon I refused to attend classes for days on end. I became touchy, angry and frustrated and would shut myself in my room for hours. Eventually, my parents started to admonish me.

The exams were approaching, but I simply didn't care. My parents and teachers were aghast at my dismal performance. Constant quarrels made life at home a living hell—all because of me.

One morning, after a particularly harsh lecture from Dad, I stood sullen-faced, in the school assembly. Then, as the other students marched to their classrooms, our principal summoned me. I almost lost my wits! Wondering what I'd done, I made my way to Sister Sylvia's office.

The next 45 minutes were the most precious moments of my life. Sister Sylvia said she had noticed a big change in me. She wanted to know

ILLUSTRATIONS BY @RAGHUKAMATH

why I was lagging in studies, so often absent and unhappy. She didn't really interrogate me. She took my hand in hers and listened patiently as I spilled out my worries. She then hugged me as I sobbed my pent up emotions out, messing her clean, crisp habit. I could feel my months of frustration and loneliness melt away in her motherly embrace.

No one had tried to understand what the real problem was, but my principal had done it with her simple act of just listening to me with such attention and caring.

"Come back to my office during the lunch break every day and have your tiffin with me," she said. So what if I had no other friends. Sister Sylvia promised to be my best friend. The next day onwards, I took my lunchbox to her office and we discussed my problems, studies, hobbies and everything on my mind. I looked forward to school every day.

As the exams approached again, I studied hard. When the results were declared, everybody was pleased, but happiest of all was my principal. With tears of joy, she presented me with a fountain pen.

I soon made new friends and was happy again. But whenever I had a problem, I could always slip into Sister Sylvia's office for a chat. The next year, I secured nearly 94 percent in my ICSE. I even got a trophy for academic merit as the whole school cheered.

I still don't know why, out of over 2000 students, my principal chose to help me. Maybe she was a solace for other girls too. Today I am a happy young woman doing my MA and hoping to become a writer. I think I have become an inspiration to several of my friends and cousins, thanks to a kind nun who cared.



THE INDU PRINCIPLE

BY BIDISHA FOUZDAR

Indu Ma'am was everything a school principal shouldn't look like. Bedecked in fake jewellery and too-bright sarees, she looked more like someone's chubby, slightly overdone, aunt. Ma'am's style statements came up for much disapproval among us, her students.

At assembly in Delhi's Mother's International School, her meandering lectures on morality were the stuff of legend—the boring kind. Moreover, she was notorious for telling you off, for long embarrassing minutes in front

of your friends, about how despicable you are just for, say, wearing soiled canvas shoes. To avoid being humiliated, we behaved faultlessly whenever Ma'am was within sight or earshot.

On reaching 11th grade, Ms Indu Pillai became my political science teacher as well. As she walked into class the first time, we braced ourselves for 35 minutes of boredom. But we were all wrong.

"How many of you have read today's newspaper?"

A few students raised their hands.

"You can learn a lot from your textbooks, but you'll learn more if you just start paying attention to the papers and to TV news," she said. She went on to talk about politicians. "In one political debate I witnessed, politicians sat like this..." And with that, our strict principal put her feet on her table. The class erupted in giggles. To our amazement, Indu Ma'am laughed with us.

Over the next two years, Indu Ma'am opened our minds to the world. She asked us to read *Anna Karenina* and other European classics. Teaching a chapter on democracy, she also discussed notorious tyrants. With Communism, she flashed back to the story about Rasputin and the Tsarina. We debated on the merits of the federal system of governance. We spoke about Ceauşescu's bathroom fittings (gold) and Imelda Marcos's shoes (over 2700 pairs). And we laughed.

Political debates also lead to personal ones. Was Winnie Mandela right in separating from Nelson Mandela? Our middle-class upbringing balked at the idea. She introduced to us the concept that divorce may just be an expression of choice, with little to do with morals. "In France, many people choose to be in relationships without marriage," she said. All this was nothing short of revolutionary for us, sheltered creatures from conservative families, but once we were nudged out of our comfort zones, a lot of our beliefs became the subject of lively lunchtime debate.

Once, she said, "How convenient wearing shorts to the beach is, and...." I did not hear the end of that line, because some of us were laughing so hard, we were doubled over.

"What?" she demanded. "You people think I was never thin?" We laughed even louder.

What never failed to amaze me was



how Indu Ma'am walked into class and metamorphosed into a great teacher, leaving her chief administrator role at the door. Her personality as principal was rigid, unyielding, and preachy—we hated it. In class, she transformed into a polymath, a storyteller who was funny, wise, inspiring, much like Socrates, the original teacher, who exercised minds and opened up intellects, even as he conversed.

The Indu Principle has stuck with me for life—to not judge people by their appearance, not even by some of their words.

THE MATHS OF LIFE

BY SAVITRI BABULKAR

Way back in 1953, high school mathematics looked like an insurmountable hurdle for me and several of my classmates at SIES High School, Mumbai. When we reached the 9th class, we got Mr Muthuswami Iyer, the stern maths teacher who was now also our class teacher. Always in spotless white dhoti-kurta and knee-length coat and ramrod-straight, he was a stickler for discipline—and we were all in awe of him. We had to arrive on time, pay undivided attention to his lectures, and dared not neglect any of his homework.

Even so, as our class teacher, we got to know him better. Noticing some of us fidgeting one day as the mid-term exams approached, he stopped solving a mathematical problem to ask us what made us seem so nervous. We started talking and he patiently heard us out. "There's too much to do," we groaned. "We're scared we'll never manage to finish our portions before the Board exams."

"Nothing is impossible," Mr Iyer told us. "This classroom is on the second floor. Do you have a problem getting up here?"

We reacted with blank stares.

"No, you don't!" he said, answering his own question. "You have a staircase to help you climb up to this level. No one expects you to make it in two giant leaps... You simply take one step at a time. Any task can be tackled if you focus on the immediate action to be taken. The rest will take care of itself, if you keep at it. One step at a time. That's the secret."



SOME THINGS PRINCIPALS WON'T TELL YOU

BY MICHELLE CROUCH

- If you want to talk to me about a problem, schedule a morning appointment, when I'm fresh. By the afternoon, I can get pretty frazzled.
- You're right, that teacher does stink, and I'm actually in the process of firing her. Legally, I can't tell you that, though, so that's why I'm sitting here quietly while you complain.
- Of course I'm going to disapprove of a child missing class for vacation. What I won't tell you is that I encouraged my own daughter to pull her kids out of school to visit me during my break.
- You think that what happens at home stays at home? We hear about your financial problems, your nasty fights, your drinking problem. We know way too much about everybody.
- The child you see at home is almost never the same one we see at school.
- Don't tell me your child would never lie to you. All kids make mistakes, and great students are often the ones most afraid to tell their parents when they make mistakes.
- When we have a child who throws things or tries to hit when she's angry, parents inevitably say, "I don't have a problem with her at home, because I spank her."
- My biggest pet peeve? Parents who complain to me before talking to the teacher.
- Don't ask me to make a teacher forgive a homework assignment or not to teach a specific subject. We don't dictate to teachers; we work with them.
- I've had a few students who were bullies. We suspend them again and again, but it's very tough to expel a student. The truth is, they have a right to an education.
- Kids are easy. It's the parents who are tough. They're constantly trying to solve their kids' problems for them.
- What do I love about this job? I can influence and inspire kids and adults, help work through problems, and find solutions. And every day I can pop into a classroom where something interesting is going on. What other job gives you all of that?

Sources: Real school principals.

Then, in his neat legible cursive hand, he wrote down an old adage on the blackboard: "The longest journey starts with a single step." Having said that, he proceeded with the maths problem we were solving, looking every bit as stern and inaccessible as before. But having heard his staircase analogy, we saw him in a new light. It was one giant leap for us.

Most of my classmates scored distinctions in maths. And I went on to become an English teacher. To this day, whenever I pass on Mr Iyer's invaluable advice to my own students, they brighten up at the prospect of a lighter academic burden.

"Tackle today's work," I say. "That's good enough. Tomorrow will take care of itself." ■

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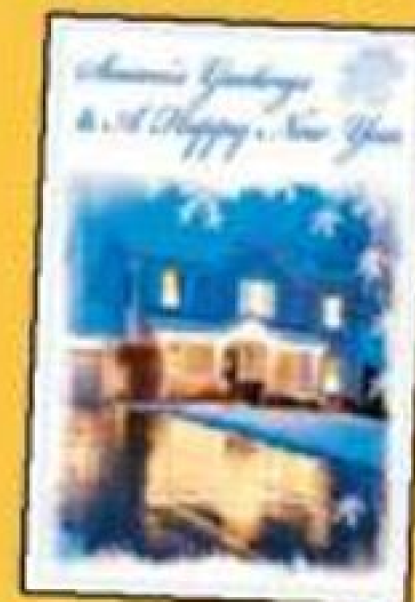
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TERROR IN THE BEAR PIT!

BY MARJO VAN LIJSSEL

A SPLASH... AND THE PLEASANT DAY AT THE ZOO INSTANTLY **TURNED INTO A NIGHTMARE**

"Look mummy, that bear is so funny!" three-year-old Amber yells excitedly. Irene Maréchal-Van de Voort, 31, standing between her daughter and son Björn, 6, looks down into the bear-pit. Three metres below, an Asian black bear is running through the shallow moat that surrounds the plateau built on rocks. He seems to be having a good time splashing water with his shiny claws.

GETTY IMAGES

Björn is watching on his mother's right hand side, enjoying the bear's antics. From above, with his round upright ears, thick ink-black fur and white V-shaped patch on his chest, the animal appears quite cuddly to the two children. But Asian black bears are known for their aggressiveness, attacking people without provocation in the wild. This particular bear, born in the zoo 29 years ago, weighs some 200 kilos, standing six-foot five-inches tall. His slightly hooked five-centimetre claws and muscled arms are perfect for climbing trees.

And for ripping through flesh. Only three years earlier, Hans Wallpott, the zoo's 80-year-old owner, had just finished feeding the animal his daily fruit ration when it reached out his paw through the bars of his cage. Wallpott, having just turned around to walk away, was violently jerked back by his right arm. Sinking his yellow fangs into the old man's arm, the bear only let go when a zoo keeper hit him on the head with a shovel. Wallpott's arm had to be amputated.

The sun shines brightly on this Wednesday, August 18, 2010, even though it's already late in the afternoon. Languidly the animals in the Eifel-Zoo in Lünebach, Germany, seek refuge in the shade. Wasps are buzzing around the trashcans situated along the winding footpaths.

A little further on, near the prairie dogs' cage, Roy van de Voort, 34, is waiting for his family. He is thinking about which route they should take back to the exit. Most visitors have already left the zoo.

The hilly and richly wooded Prüm valley, about 40 kilometres from the Belgian border, is popular with Dutch tourists, such as the Van de Voorts. Irene, a slender, cheerful radiographer, and Roy, a tall, sporty engineer at the Department of Waterways and Public Works in the Netherlands, enjoy spending time with their children in their holiday bungalow.

The kids had been very eager to visit the zoo. That morning Björn had been eagerly flipping through the zoo leaflet. "They've got panthers and tigers there!" he had cried in delight. Amber, a happy, energetic girl with long blonde hair, was a true animal lover. Horses, cows, furry guinea pigs, anything on four legs could count on her loving attention. She was now jumping up and down in anticipation. After packing sandwiches, drinks and their camera, Roy, Irene and the children got into their car.

Amber, standing immediately to her mother's left, presses her face against

ASIAN BLACK BEARS ARE KNOWN FOR THEIR AGGRESSIVENESS, ATTACKING PEOPLE WITHOUT PROVOCATION IN THE WILD.



the metre-high meshed wire fence that surrounds the bear pit. The fence, that has big square holes in it, is placed against an older and lower rail fence that is made from two horizontal iron tubes with a single iron wire attached to protruding vertical bars on top. It's quite low for an adult, but it meets the legal requirements for a zoo permit. To Amber, however, the fence obscures her view of the bear.

While Irene explains to her children how bears live in the wild and briefly faces Björn, Amber places her feet in the fence's square holes. With a bit of effort, tongue out of mouth, she pulls herself up yet a little higher, to get a better view. In a few seconds she climbs to the top of the wired fence.

"Why is he running through the water like that?" Björn asks his mother while pointing at the bear in the pit.

"Bears like to play in water," Irene replies as she turns towards her daughter only about a metre away. Their eyes meet. Having reached the top of the fence, Amber suddenly loses her balance. She tries to grab the fence, but misses. Bewildered, she looks up at her mother, as she starts to tumble head down towards the pit. "Mummy, what's happening," she seems to want to say.

Irene stands as if nailed to the ground, heart racing. *My daughter's going to die*, it flashes through her mind. She wants to reach out her hands, but they won't move. As if in a slow motion sequence, she watches

her daughter tumble over the fence.

Strolling from the prairie dogs' enclosure to the bear-pit, Roy suddenly hears an unidentified, muffled splash, followed by his wife's horrified cry. He starts running across the footpath towards the bear-pit, some 50 metres away.

Arriving a few seconds later, he sees his daughter standing up to her waist in the shallow moat. She's shrieking and crying, her head bloody from the fall. The black bear, called Mike, having jumped up at the sound of the splash, has already approached her. He is sitting directly opposite the little toddler, less than a metre away, waving his paws, armed with ten razor-sharp nails.

Roy throws his shoulder bag over the fence to distract the bear. Without hesitation, and in a single move, he jumps after the bag, into the pit.

C**rashing heavily** with his left leg on the rocks, he unintentionally hits the bear with the other. The animal's thick fur feels rough like a broom, its penetrating scent stings Roy's nose. *No way, I'm fighting a bear*, he realizes as he scrambles to his feet and looks around. But there is no time for rational thought.

Mike, unpertubed by Roy's karate-style kick, is holding Amber in a bear hug, obscuring the father's view of her. From behind Roy can see how the dark, imposing figure has bent his head as if it's resting on Amber's head. Judging by the sucking noises the animal produces, he's licking the little girl's hair with his slithering pink tongue. Saliva runs from the animal's mouth, his foul breath hitting Amber, who looks down, in the face.

A strong primeval instinct takes hold of Roy. The intrepid father starts to kick and push Mike in order to scare him off. The bear turns around, growling and hissing. Swinging his long, pointed muzzle filled with rows of glistening teeth, he bites Roy twice in both legs. Then he lashes out with his claws and grazes Roy's chest.

Feeling no pain despite his considerable injuries, Roy is relieved to see his daughter now that the bear has turned around to face him. *I have to make a dash for it, now!* he thinks as he jumps towards his daughter. As he grabs her, Amber clings tightly around her father's neck. "Daddy!" the little one sobs.

Irene can only repeat her desperate calls for help while she searches the paths near the pit for anyone around. But there's no one. Even the zoo keep-

ROY GLANCES DOWN AND SEES HIS DAUGHTER STANDING UP TO HER WAIST IN THE SHALLOW MOAT. SHE'S SHRIEKING AND CRYING, HER HEAD BLOODY FROM THE FALL.

AP

ers seem to have left. Then she sees her husband, panting and bleeding from his chest, has moved to a wall in a corner of the pit, holding Amber on his arm. "Push her up!" Irene shouts. Bending over the fence, she manages to snatch her daughter's hands and pull her up.

At this point, a middle-aged German man, alarmed by Irene's screams, comes running up. Halting next to Irene, he spots Roy in the pit and turns pale.

"Get out of there!" Irene yells at Roy, who is trying to climb out of the hole by gripping the bars. Holding Amber on one arm, she leans forward and stretches out her other hand to pull up her husband. The German tourist, with his belly resting on the barbed wire fence, also stretches down as far as he can.

But when Roy tries to reach the hands above him, he accidentally grabs the electric fencing that's jutting out from the wall of the pit. The electrical shock throws Roy on his back into the water.

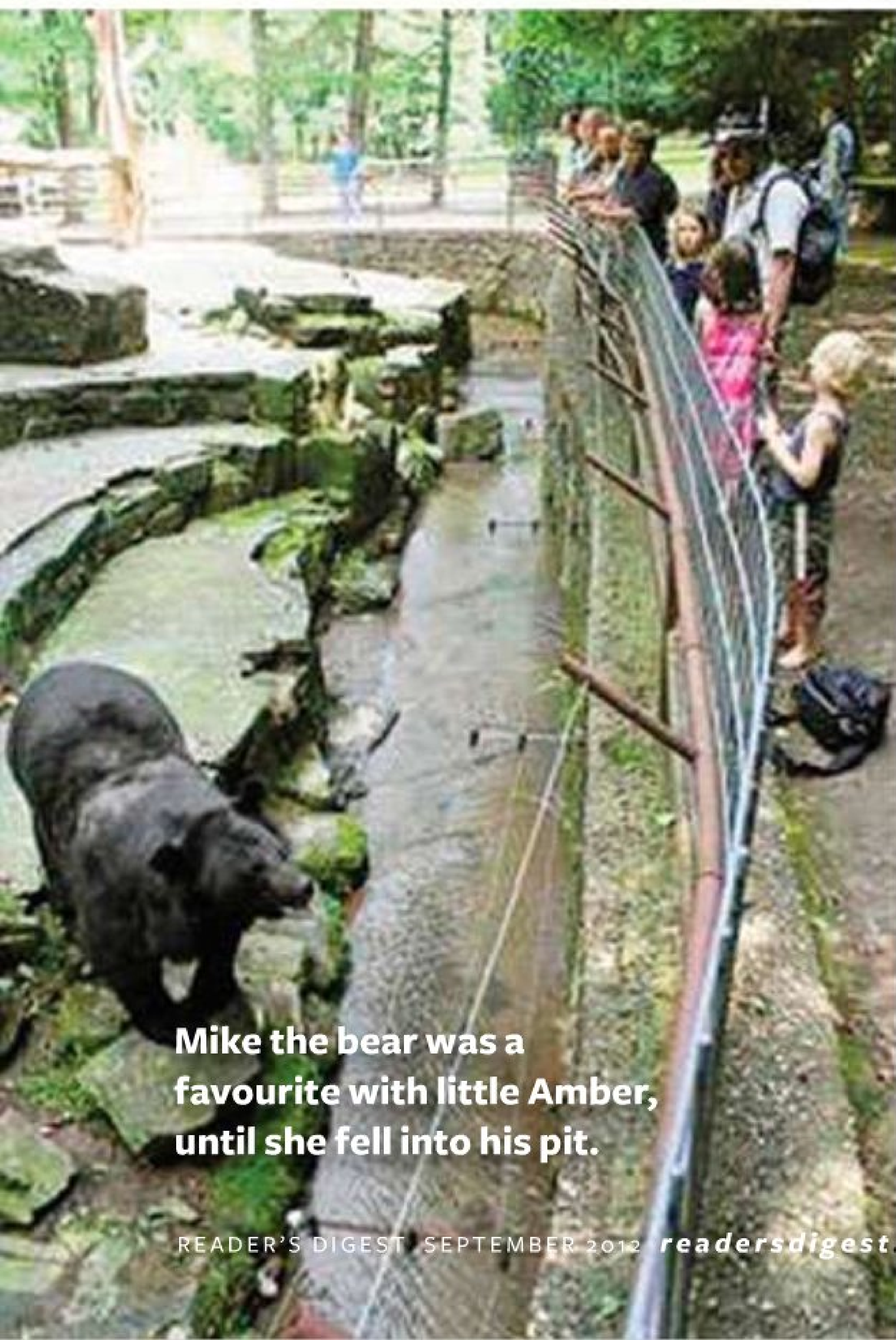
Mike has climbed onto the plateau and is observing Roy's second attempt to climb out of the pit. The animal roars and growls at the unfortunate intruder and is clearly becoming more and more agitated.

But Roy, his body running on adrenaline, no longer cares for the angry animal only metres away. *I have to get out now*, is all the exhausted father can think while he gets back on his feet. In a final, desperate effort and with the last of his strength, Roy pushes himself up and jumps.

Heaving and cursing, Irene and the German pull Roy up. He's out!

Meanwhile, the German tourist's wife and 13-year-old son have arrived at the bear pit. The boy quickly reaches for his cellphone and dials the emergency number, while his mother, shocked and in tears by the frantic scene, offers to take over Amber from Irene so she can help Roy. The sobbing and bleeding little girl does not resist when her mother hands her over.

Roy, who tries to stand up, now notices his left foot can't support his weight any more. Shaking and reeling



Mike the bear was a favourite with little Amber, until she fell into his pit.

he lies down on the ground and gasps: "Did I do well?" But then he seems to go into shock as his body reacts to the adrenaline overdose. "Stay awake," Irene yells at her husband as she slaps him hard in the face.

"What's keeping that ambulance?" the German tourist calls nervously to his wife and son.

Meanwhile, Claudia Müller, a 38-year-old waitress from the zoo restaurant, arrives on the scene with a first aid kit. She covers Roy with a hypothermic blanket and only then notices Amber. The toddler has her eyes wide open. She scuffles and screams in fear. Müller kneels down to console the child. All this while, Björn has been quietly standing, crying, near the llama enclosure only a couple of metres away.

As the sound of sirens nears, Mike is still snarling from inside his pit. A police car pulls up, followed moments later by an ambulance and emergency doctor Markus Kremer from a nearby town. Immediately behind them a second ambulance arrives.

Amber is placed on a stretcher and hooked up to a dripper. Her soaked wet clothes are removed to examine her more carefully. Though the gash on her head looks nasty, the girl is not considered to be in any immediate danger. The nurses cover her up with a thermal blanket with hot air heating pumps.

"Prüm does not have a pediatric ward," one of the nurses informs his colleague. "The little one has to be taken to Trier."



Back home and safe: Amber with her father Roy.

THE TODDLER HAS HER EYES WIDE OPEN. SHE SCUFFLES AND SCREAMS IN FEAR.

"Are you alright?" a male nurse asks Roy. The brave father nods his head. His foot hurts the most, but the nurses leave it for now, giving priority to the bite marks in his legs. "Your daughter is going to be fine," Dr Kremer reassures him. "Just keep on lying down, nice and easy."

Amber, with her mother beside her, is flown by helicopter to a hospital in Trier, about 70 kilometres away. Her injuries turn out to be relatively mild, leaving only a few scars on her head. The ambulance takes Roy and Björn to another hospital nearby. Roy's most serious injury is a fractured foot.

The German tourist and his family refuse to take any credit for their help and prefer to keep their names out of publicity. The Eifel-Zoo owners have since changed the fencing so that it is now impossible for children to climb on top of it. Roy, who was awarded a Carnegie Hero Fund silver medal in June last year, and Irene have indicated they do not want Mike to be put down. It was his pit that Amber and Roy ended up in and so his behaviour was perfectly natural, they argue. Mike is now 29 years old—bears in captivity do not grow much older—and he will be allowed to complete his remaining time in the zoo.

According to research, 85 percent of people confronted by such a situation in real life will be paralyzed by fear. Roy went into a full year of mental and physical recovery. He had smashed his heel by jumping into the bear pit, but he is determined to do all the exercises he can to prevent permanent damage. It was a great personal triumph for him that—on May 15, 2011—he finished a 250-kilometre bicycle marathon in the Flemish Ardennes.

Roy, Irene and the children have all been in therapy. They still have a long way to go. Björn regularly makes drawings of scary animals and asks many questions about the accident. Amber is dead scared of animals, even flies frighten her, but she has slowly learnt to pet a rabbit again. She relives the accident by 'playing' it out.

GOFFE STRUIKSMA

THEY'RE OUT TO PRAISE ME

"There's no such thing as positive paranoia. You never think you're overhearing someone saying something really nice about you. You never think you're hearing, 'See that guy over there? I really want to give him a trophy'."

Alasdair Tremblay-Birchall, Australian comedian

Sameer at his desk: "Poetry was in my blood."

Yeh Pen *Banaraswala*

How Sameer followed his dream and wrote over 3800 songs for Bollywood

BY ADITYA SHARMA

When Sheetala Pandey came to Bombay in 1980, he was a 22-year-old wannabe poet with an assumed name, Sameer. The younger son of Anjaan, the noted Bollywood lyricist from Banaras who wrote many immortal film songs*, Sameer's father had other ambitions for him. Why, you get busi nessmen's sons becoming businessmen and actors' kids becoming actors, but it's rare for a poet to see his child succeed as a poet. So Sameer first joined a bank after college, but his heart was not in it.

In Bombay, Sameer eked out a living as a freelance journalist for film magazine *Madhuri*, giving tuitions to schoolkids and writing some songs for films in Bhojpuri, his mother tongue. All along, Sameer knew what he wanted: to scale the forbidding walls of Hindi filmdom, then dominated by stalwart lyricists like Majrooh Sultanpuri, Indeevar, Anand Bakshi and Anjaan. Interviewing Bollywood personalities for *Madhuri* gradually gave Sameer a foot in the door. He struggled to get in, worked hard and has stayed there for three decades, writing almost 4000 songs and thrice winning the *Filmfare* Best Lyrics award.

Reader's Digest met the amiable Sameer recently at his flat in suburban Andheri, Mumbai, where he told us his story of hard work and passion for the one job he loves.

Reader's Digest: *Your father didn't want you to be a lyricist.*

Sameer: Yes, because it was after 17 years of struggling that he achieved any success. Lots of people are writing songs, but the Hindi film industry

* Anjaan's songs include "*O khaike paan Banaraswala*" and "*Rote hue aate hain sab.*"

PHOTO: GAUTAM RAJADHYAKSHA/© ANITA PANDEY

is a very risky, difficult one for a songwriter.

RD: *But weren't you inspired by your father?*
Sameer: Definitely. Poetry was in my blood.

RD: *What's the difference between a poet and a lyricist?*
Sameer: A poet writes whatever he wants, but a lyricist is always surrounded by the story, the tunes, and the selectors like the director, producer, or the actors who decide if a song is right.

RD: *What did you do before you came to Mumbai?*
Sameer: I'm from Varanasi. I did my MCom there and had joined the Central Bank of India as an officer, a job I quit after two days.

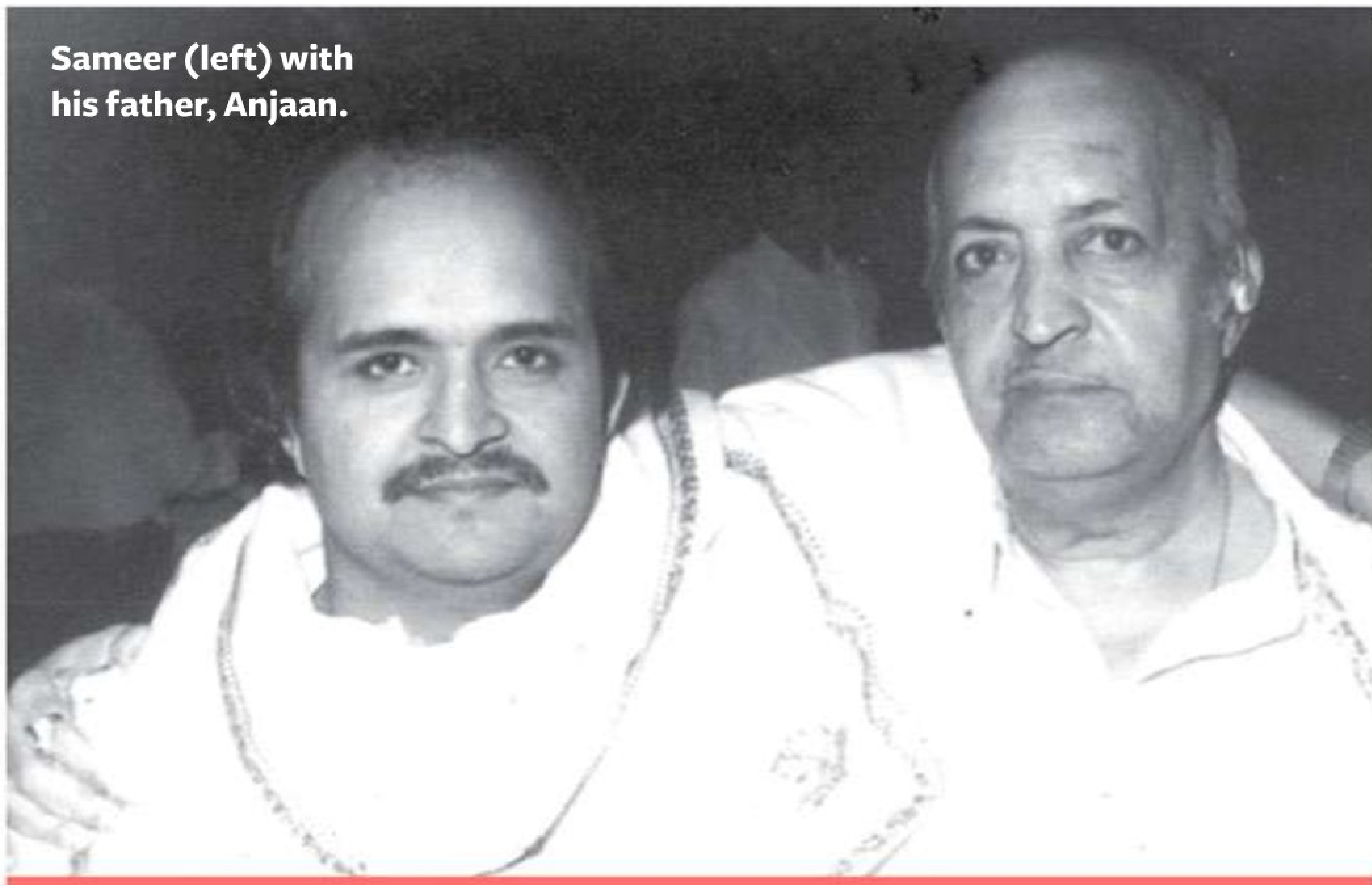
RD: *But why did you quit?*
Sameer: I had to work with balance sheets and such things. I told the manager that I was not in the field I wanted to be in. I resigned on the second day, took ₹500 from my mother and boarded a train to Bombay. For a year Papa didn't know I too was here. I decided it's my life, that I will fight it out. I finally met him at a restaurant, and Papa said, 'I told you don't come here but you came against my wishes.' But he called me to stay with him and I did.

RD: *What else did your father say when you met?*
Sameer: He tested my resolve, saying 'I will ask you three questions.' His first question was 'Have you ever been in love with anyone?' I was shocked, but I said 'Yes, I have.' Then he asked, 'What did you think about when you fell in love?' I said 'When you fall in love you don't think about what is going to happen.' Later he explained, 'This industry is much like a girlfriend. It can be honest and dishonest. So if you are a true lover, you'll not bother whether or not she will be faithful.'

RD: *Very poetic! So you passed the test?*
Sameer: Actually, I'd just passed his first one. The second question was more a statement: 'If you want to reach heaven,' he told me, 'you have to die first. Most people want to achieve heaven but don't want to die. Do you agree?' I agreed. He meant that to become a successful songwriter, you have to work hard—die for it, literally.

Third, he said, 'Whenever you need money, I will always be ready to give, but the day you ask me to write one word for you saying I am stuck somewhere, Papa please help me, I will throw you out of my house. Agreed?' I agreed. He explained that 'Struggle is going to sustain you till your last breath in this industry. First you will struggle for success, and then you have to struggle to maintain the position.'

RD: *Tell us about your struggles.*
Sameer: Quite often, producers agreed to meet me, but didn't. Or they


Sameer (left) with his father, Anjaan.

met three hours after the appointed time. Once a music director—I won't name him—called me over to his third-floor flat. I recited nearly 40 poems for him, reading from my diary, and he listened to every one of them. He then asked for my diary and threw it out the window, saying I wasted his time and that I didn't have any knowledge of song writing.

RD: *Yet he was patient enough to listen to you?*

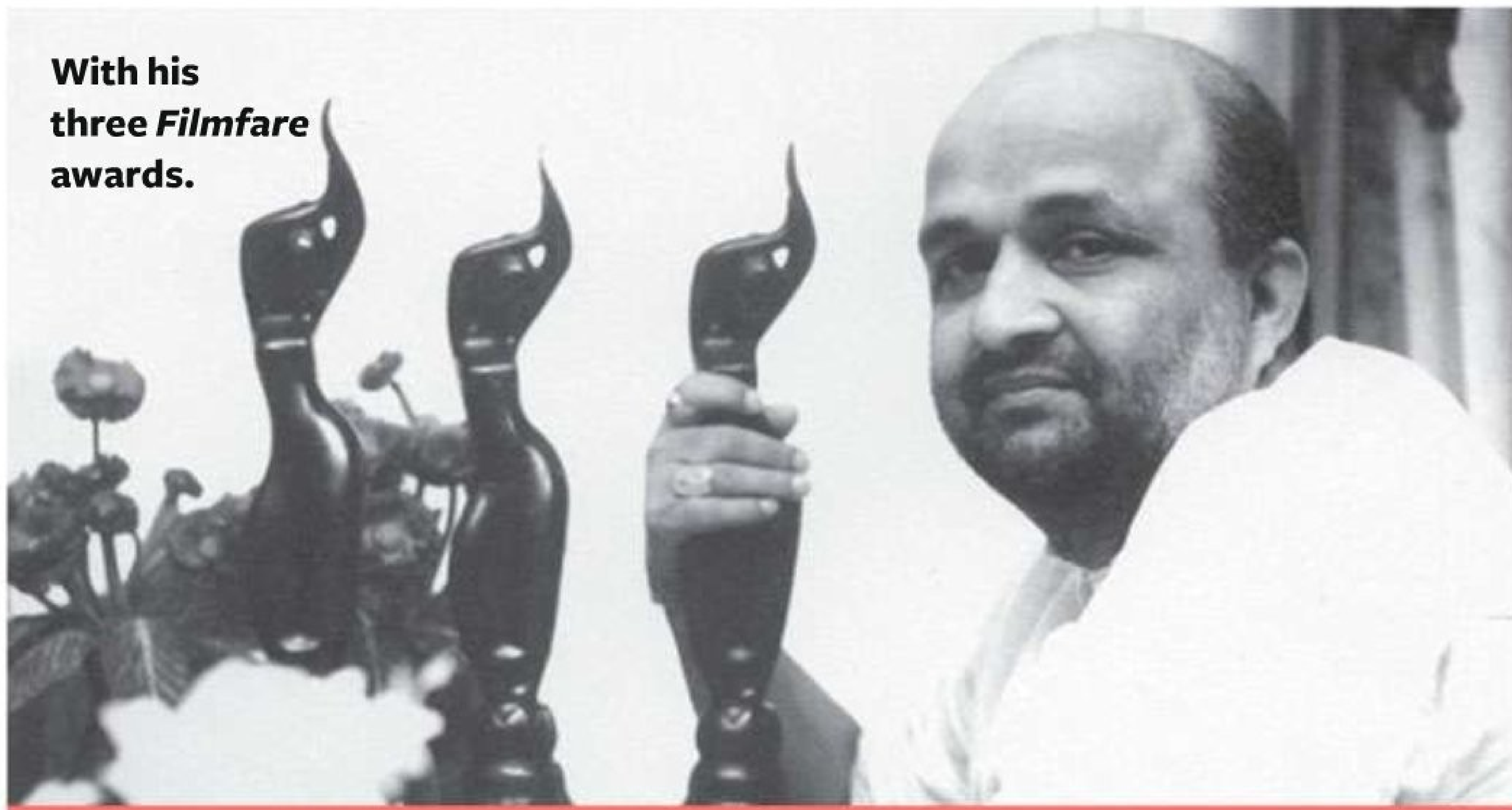
Sameer: That's what shocks. He then said, 'I will give you the money to go back to Varanasi. Don't waste your time here. You are also going to ruin your father's name.' As I walked down the stairs, I was shaking. I remembered lines from my father's poem: *Jag abhi jeeta nahi hai, main abhi haara nahi hoon. Faisla hone se pehle, haar kyon sweekaar kar loon.* [The world hasn't yet won, I haven't yet lost. Before the verdict is out, why should I accept defeat?] It made me even more determined.

RD: *What was your first song in a Hindi film?*

Sameer: It was *Gori pareshaan hai, kaali pareshaan hai*, in the film *Bekhabar*. It got some recognition because its *mukhda* [chorus] was catchy.

RD: *What happened then?*

Sameer: I got my second film, *Ab Aayega Mazaa* with Anand-Milind as music directors. This was followed by *Love 86* with Laxmikant-Pyarelal. And then I got to write songs for the film *Dil* and that was the biggest hit of 1990. From there on I got 100 percent


With his three *Filmfare* awards.

recognition and got *Aashiqui* immediately. *Aashiqui* was the turning point of my life.

RD: *But that almost didn't happen, right?*
Sameer: Yes, the late Gulshan Kumar, who ran T-Series, was its producer. A close friend of his told him that its music won't be popular because it didn't sound like film music; that they sounded like ghazals. So Gulshanji told me, 'Sorry I'm not going to release this music, I am very upset with it.' Nadeem-Shravan, the music directors, called me and said, '*Yeh aadmi to paagal hai.* What do we do now?' We told this to Mr Mahesh Bhatt, the film's director. And Maheshji told Gulshanji, 'I'll put it in writing that this film will be a big hit.' So Gulshanji agreed to release the music and publicized it very well. Anyway, *Aashiqui* created history—no film has broken its record for the highest sale of audio cassettes and CDs.

RD: *Have Bollywood trends changed a lot since your father's day?*
Sameer: Definitely. The whole film-making process keeps changing with every decade. A new generation has its own thought, its own environment, its language. I wrote for a film called *Phir Hera Pheri.* In one song's first line there, I've used four languages: *Kitne armaan maan maan... sohniye jaage thare vaaste sohniye. All day all night mujhe yaad sataye teri.*' There is Punjabi, Rajasthani, English, and Hindi. When people ask me, 'Sir, what is this?' I say you talk to the present generation of kids, they use a similar language.

RD: *How do you follow the latest trends?*
Sameer: I have to upgrade myself on what the younger generation likes. My children are my biggest critics. I

am always buying new music—both English and Hindi—and listening very carefully, learning about the changing musical trends and the kind of words being used. That is a struggle, the reason why I have survived here for these thirty years.

RD: *But lots of youngsters still listen to older singers like Mohammed Rafi.*
Sameer: Good work never dies.

RD: *Now, where is the man who flung your notebook out?*
Sameer: He is no more. But he saw my success.

RD: *You met him again?*
Sameer: Yes, I did. He told me that after seeing me do well, he regretted his conduct and apologized. So I told him, 'Uncle, don't worry, it happens. Maybe you didn't like my work—that was your personal opinion, but please do not discourage anyone like that.'

RD: *You said to your father that you fell in love. Is she the girl you married?*
Sameer: She's not in my life, nor is she my wife. She is no more.

RD: *She died very young?*
Sameer: She was from another caste and her family was dead against our getting married. I was struggling in Bombay then. So they said to her, 'Why are you unnecessarily ruining your life? Better settle down.' They got her married, but she died of cholera soon afterwards.

RD: *Looking back, did all that pain help inspire you?*
Sameer: Definitely. My father used to say that two things are important for a creator: *awaaragi* and *tanhaayi* [vagrancy and loneliness]. Pain is a very important factor.

RD: *So would you want such pain to happen again?*
Sameer: It is not necessary. Once you experience that kind of pain, it is more than enough for a lifetime.

RD: *Having tasted so much success, have you changed?*
Sameer: People say I look the same. Success doesn't affect me. You change with the times, but I don't believe in changing with success. I remain a learner, keen on writing my next song, and I am sure I'll write it nervously.

ISN'T IT OBVIOUS?

My kid brother Zanmeiyui and I were at the park when he tripped and fell. I rushed to him as he cried in pain. "Stop crying!" I scolded. "You're all dirty now. How could you be so careless? Where are your eyes?" Zanmeiyui sniffed and pointed to his eyes and said, "Here."

Soshanphi Ningshen, New Delhi

Something strange and inexplicable has been happening all the time in Craig and Brenton Gurney's lives. They have a connection doctors can't begin to explain

TWIN POWER

BY HELEN SIGNY

Brenton Gurney sat outside the operation theatre at Westmead Hospital in Sydney, Australia, hoping for a sign. It was 11pm, and his twin brother, Craig, had been in surgery for five hours. The older of the 38-year-old identical twins was undergoing delicate neurosurgery, and Brenton couldn't shake the dread of what might lie ahead for his sibling and best friend. Doctors had warned that Craig might not survive. Even if he did, there was a 50 percent chance he'd have brain impairment.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY PIP BLACKWOOD



Craig (left) and Brenton Gurney.

As the surgical team worked on Craig, his brother, together with Craig's wife, Nicole, and the twins' parents, Cheryl and Dennis, waited and ached for news.

By 1am, the family was near exhaustion. Nicole, Cheryl and Dennis kept glancing over at Brenton, hoping he'd know something they didn't. But he was just as desperate. Part of him wished he could be on the operating table instead of his brother, to protect him from whatever was unfolding. That was a normal brotherly response; something most of us would feel when a loved one was in a critical state. But for Brenton it was much more. Something strange and inexplicable had been happening all their lives. And the recent headaches Brenton had been enduring had been quite awful.

Craig and Brenton Gurney share the unique bond you often hear about with identical twins. They look similar, in 38 years they've never fallen out, they both love football, pick out the onions from their meals and would choose a chocolate bar over an apple any day. They both married women called Nicole.

"There are differences," says Craig. "He's more conservative. I'm more a spendthrift." Craig is the older by ten minutes and all their lives he has been the leader: the first to kiss a girl; the first to try alcohol; the first to get married. He's the one who likes to take control. For as long as they remember, Craig has felt physical symptoms when Brenton—the more accident-prone of the two—injures himself.

It first happened when they were babies: one day Brenton fell out of his high chair, yet it was Craig who clutched his head and cried. As schoolboys, Brenton was knocked unconscious during a football game and Craig—who'd had his back to the incident—found himself suddenly and temporarily paralyzed. One day in their late teens, the phone rang at home. Before their father could pick it up, Craig called out: "That's Brenton, he's been in a car accident but he's OK." Sure enough, it was Brenton on the phone: he'd rolled the car but had walked away with nothing more serious than a cut on his finger.

Then last year, Brenton called his brother to say he was developing an angry rash on his back, inner arms and inner legs. The next day it seemed to have cleared and he went on a trip. But that evening, at home in Mt Colah, north of Sydney, Craig started having breathing problems and noticed an itchy rash on exactly the same parts of his body. The next day, when Craig and Nicole were out shopping, she pulled him aside to tell him the rash on his back was much worse. Thousands of kilometres to the north, Brenton had reacted to an insecticide in his room, gone into anaphylactic shock and been rushed to hospital.

Had they been exposed to the same virus or chemical? Unlikely, as they hadn't seen each other for over a week. It was more evidence to the Gurney twins that Craig and Brenton



They have a connection **that defies current scientific explanation.**

Brenton (on the right in both images) with Craig for day one at Mt Colah Public School in 1979; and as toddler chefs.



have a connection that defies current scientific explanation. "We've always thought it was pretty normal, that it was a twin thing," says Craig. "Though it's always given us something to talk and joke about."

In the more than 20 years Professor John Hopper, director of the Australian Twin Registry (ATR), has been working with twins, he's heard many similar stories. "You hear about it anecdotally, but no one has ever studied it properly," he says.

That said, the similarities—and differences—between twins offer a gold mine of information to medical


Studies on twins are uncovering amazing findings.

science. Because identical twins have split from the same fertilized egg and share the same genetic material, understanding why some get sick and others don't gives researchers a deep insight into the power of genes versus environment.

Back in their 20s, the Gurney twins signed up to the ATR, the world's largest and most active database of twins who are willing to take part in carefully designed scientific studies. Their mother had always signed them up for twin clubs, but it was Craig who made the decision to get them involved in research. "He thought it was a good idea to help." Over the years they've been involved in several projects. Then last year they were invited to join the TWIN-E study, run out of the Brain Dynamics Centre at Westmead Millennium Institute. Over four years, the researchers aimed to study the brains of 1500 twins to work out what makes some people resilient and others prone to mental illness. It runs subjects through a series of tests, with follow-ups 12 months later.

Craig wasn't overly keen on this study. As the father of two little girls, and with a busy job as a regional manager for a major retailer, he wasn't sure he could spare the time. But Brenton, usually the more reticent of the two, pushed him to say yes. Brenton had

Double the value

Westmead's "TWIN-E" project in emotional wellbeing is studying the brains of healthy twins and aims to identify which gene, environment and brain markers predict resilience to mental illness.

So far the study, which is funded by an Australian Research Council grant, has found that the brain is plastic and malleable. Even emotional responses like the fight or flight response, which you would have thought were genetically programmed, can be changed.

"The genes and the environment probably interact, so you might have a certain gene that makes you more inclined to seek certain environments that are more positive," says Dr Justine Gatt, a research investigator on the study. She's often struck by the incredible similarities between her subjects—and she divides those she's met into twins who want to be the same as their siblings, and those who want to be different.

"I had one pair of twins who came on different days, and on the second day it was like I was back to yesterday. I felt like I was pretending I didn't know the person, and yet it felt like I'd just met them again. You experience this false sense of familiarity."

GETTY IMAGES

been suffering searing headaches for two-and-a-half years. He'd seen a chiropractor, had his eyes and blood pressure tested and cut out caffeine, but nothing seemed to help. Everyone was worried —his wife, his best mate and, of course, Craig, not least because their father had had a benign tumour on his pituitary gland some years before.

Brenton had been told by his doctor to get an MRI but he'd put it off because of the prohibitive cost. The Twin-E study offered the chance of a free scan. "We've got to go for this," Brenton urged Craig.

First they were mailed a kit to take a saliva sample so that researchers could test their genes. Then they were asked to complete some online tasks.

The second part of the study involved a trip to Westmead Hospital for the scans. For a while it seemed as though the researchers had forgotten them, but as Brenton's headaches grew worse, he rang to chase them up. "We signed up for part two of the study," he said. "Do you still need us?" They did.

Brenton had his scan in February 2011 and waited nervously for the results. When he hadn't heard, he decided to call the Brain Dynamics Centre. The scan was clear and offered no clue about his headaches. "Can I get that in writing?" he joked, though he still felt uneasy about the results. He just thought there was something wrong.

Finally, in March, Craig found time to go to Westmead. For an hour he was hooked up to a headful of electrodes in a test to watch his brain activity as he responded to various stimuli.

After that came the MRI, a 20-minute scan that would help construct a more detailed image of his brain. As Craig relaxed and watched a video, the researchers recorded the size of different sections of his brain.

When the test was done, Craig thanked the staff and stepped outside to carry on with his life.

A couple of weeks later, Craig was at Raymond Terrace, north of Sydney, for work when he turned on his phone and noticed a long list of missed calls from Brain Dynamics. *I must have done really well on the test!* he thought. Before calling back, he called Brenton to have a little joke. "They didn't call you," he jested. "My brain must be better than yours."

It never occurred to them that it might be something serious.

When Craig finally called the centre,

When Craig called, the doctor got straight to the point: **"We've found some sort of mass."**

the doctor got straight to the point: "We've found some sort of mass." A few days later, Craig was sitting in the office of neurosurgeon Dr Brian Owler, looking at the scan showing a 4.2cm clival chordoma, a very rare bone tumour, at the base of his skull.

Owler was perplexed: usually a patient with a tumour this size would have experienced severe neurological symptoms like headaches or hearing loss. "How are you standing here without any breathing issues or blurred vision?" the doctor wondered.

It was then that Brenton's long complaints about headaches started to make sense. "I've always felt Brenton's pain," says Craig. "It's never been the other way around."

Diagnosed on April 29, Craig's surgery was scheduled for May 10. The tumour was growing near the brain stem and basilar artery, meaning even the tiniest slip of the scalpel could cause catastrophic injury or death.

Craig and Nicole readied themselves for the worst, sorting out his superannuation and signing over legal power of attorney to her. On Mother's Day, May 8, Craig asked Brenton to shoot a video of him saying goodbye to his little girls, eight-year-old Jasmine and five-year-old Ella.

It was particularly tough for Brenton. He was the one with the headaches, and he was racked with guilt that it was Craig, not him, who was on the operating table.

"It should have been me," he wrote to Brenton in a letter that he gave his best buddy before the surgery. But Craig reassured him that it was the right way round and tried to laugh it off. He was always first—why should cancer be any different?

On the Monday, Craig signed off work at noon. "It's not goodbye. It's see you soon," he e-mailed his colleagues. Then he and Nicole spent a quiet afternoon in each other's arms before he checked into Westmead Hospital the following morning.

Even the tiniest slip of the scalpel **could cause catastrophic injury or death.**

To access the tumour, the surgeons went in telescopically through Craig's nose, past the sinuses and into the base of the skull. There they removed tiny pieces of the tumour, cell by cell. Eventually, at 3:30am, Dr Owler came into see the waiting family. "Everything went well," he said. "He's going to be OK."

Craig came out of surgery with an uncomfortable breathing tube down his throat and spent a tough eight days



From left: Nicole, Brenton and Bridgette; Craig with baby Gemma, Nicole and daughters Ella and Jasmine.

in intensive care. But his recovery was remarkably quick. Ten days later, he was well enough to go home—without any of the neurological damage he'd so feared. Four weeks later he returned to work.

Since then Craig has undergone 40 mentally gruelling sessions of radiation therapy and will be closely monitored in case the tumour returns. But his prognosis is excellent.

Craig's not worrying about the future. In fact, looking back on New Year's Eve 2011, he realized it had been one of the best years of his life.

"I recently joked with Brenton, 'When have you ever taken the lead in anything?' But if he hadn't pushed so hard for us to do the study, things would be very different. At the end of the day he saved my life by getting us involved in the twin research."

That afternoon before the surgery, Craig and Nicole conceived another child, a little girl who was born in January. They named her Gemma Hope, a powerful and permanent reminder of the loving bonds that have brought them to the other side of the family's ordeal. And Brenton's chronic headaches? Almost gone.

Women now have choices. They can be married, not married, have a job, not have a job, be married with children, unmarried with children. Men have the same choice we've always had: work, or prison. *Tim Allen*

FIVE FOODS THAT WILL SAVE THE WORLD

Despite foreign aid, Live Aid, food shipments and fair trade, one in six of the world's people still goes hungry every day. And population growth means that demand for food is expected to rise by 40 percent in the next 20 years.

But here's the good news. For decades, scientists have worked to create foods that can boost health, beat global warming, survive droughts—and transform millions of lives in the process. And now, some of their brilliant innovations are coming to fruition.

BY ELLIE ROSE

PHOTOGRAPHED BY ALEXANDER KENT

1 SCUBA RICE



IMAGINE WORKING FOR MONTHS, planting and tending a field of crops to feed your family of 22, only to see it all washed away.

That was Mostafa Kamal's predicament. Four out of every five years, the rice grower from Rangpur district in Bangladesh lost huge swathes of rice plants to flooding. Two hectares of his six-hectare farm were inundated so often he no longer used them. And he wasn't an isolated case. Four million tonnes of rice—enough to feed 30 million people—are lost every year to flooding in Bangladesh and India alone.

But this could soon become a thing of the past. Scientists at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines have developed a "scuba" rice that can survive up to two weeks of complete submergence. After three years of testing, the first scuba-rice strain, named Swarna-Sub1, was released in February 2009. It has shown promising results in India's flood-prone areas.

Of course, normal rice plants grow underwater. But they do so extremely quickly—pushing out their shoots as fast as possible to try to find the sunlight. This uses a great deal of energy and, if they remain submerged for more than a few days, they die. The clever thing about scuba rice is that, when covered by water for too long, it becomes dormant, then starts growing when it's able quickly to reach the surface again.

RESEARCHERS CREATED THE RICE by isolating a gene that creates flood tolerance, a variety that's particularly hardy but whose yields are too low for commercial use. They then transferred the gene into new high-yield "mega varieties" with good grain quality and pest-resistance attributes. Work is on to create more varieties for different environments that should benefit 18 million families by 2021.

THE BREAKTHROUGH WAS 30 YEARS IN THE MAKING. Its lead developer, IRRI's Dr David Mackill, tried to breed a rice in the 1980s, but the science wasn't advanced enough. His perseverance has paid off now, though. Mostafa has been one of the farmers testing scuba seeds and has seen a 50 percent increase in his crop. This, he says, is life-changing. "Two extra hectares [of production] is a big jump."

2 BITTER GOURD



OF THE 285 MILLION PEOPLE WORLDWIDE WHO SUFFER FROM TYPE-2 DIABETES, about 80 percent live in low- and middle-income countries.

In rapidly developing nations—such as India and China—where health education is poor, people are gaining weight by eating too much meat and fast food, and not taking enough exercise. In another decade, 30 million more Indians will join the league of over 60 million compatriots who are already diabetic. In sub-Saharan Africa and Oceania, meanwhile, a reliance on starchy staples means people consume too many calories and not enough nutrients. Insulin treatment can help manage diabetes—but, in some places, annual care for one person can cost 75 percent of the average income.

ENTER A WARTY VEG. Bitter gourd, which can be used in stir-fries and curries, contains high levels of charantin, which increases insulin sensitivity and compounds that activate AMPK, a protein that regulates glucose uptake. It also has a form of lectin (a sugar-binding protein) that lowers blood glucose and suppresses appetite. In 2007, the Philippine Department of Health found that a serving has a similar effect to a daily dose of the anti-diabetes drug glibenclamide.

SCIENTISTS AT THE WORLD VEGETABLE CENTRE based in Taiwan are experimenting with 280 varieties of the fruit—which grows in the tropics and sub-tropics—to try to cross-breed a "super" version with maximum anti-diabetic effect. The centre hopes to have the variety ready for market within five to eight years.



3 MOONG BEANS *(DAL)*

THEY MIGHT NOT SOUND DYNAMIC, but moong beans are playing a vital role in feeding some of the most vulnerable people in South Asia.

"Women and kids are particularly at risk as they often don't have a very high position in society, so the men eat first and they get the left-overs," says Dr Jacqueline Hughes, deputy director of the World Vegetable Centre. "Their diets lack micronutrients, which makes them ill. One in 15 South Asian children dies before they're five."

Iron deficiency—causing everything from anemia to retarded growth—is a major concern, and moong beans are very rich in this mineral. But, until recently, farmers were reluctant to cultivate them, as they take up to 110 days to grow and give low yields. Their pods are also very fragile and shatter easily.

BUT THE CENTRE SAW THE POTENTIAL TO IMPROVE THE BEANS back in the 1970s. Now, extensive cross-breeding has finally created moong-bean plants with a 55-day maturation process, good yields and hardier pods that grow on the top of the plant for easy picking. The new seeds have been disseminated to 1.5 million farmers across Asia, resulting in a 35 percent increase in production.

"The beans are really tasty, too," says Dr Hughes, who runs cookery workshops to demonstrate the crop's potential. "My favourite recipe is *dhuli moong dal*."

BANANAS AND PLANTAIN ARE A CRUCIAL FOOD SOURCE across sub-Saharan Africa. They also provide a vital income for some 50 million smallholders in the east-African highlands and Great Lakes region there.

But, in 2001, an outbreak of a new disease, banana xanthomonas wilt (BXW), left a trail of destruction and misery in Uganda that spread to the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda and Tanzania. The disease causes the banana plant to drip with bacterial ooze, leaving the fruit inedible. It halved the income of many farmers, and plunged thousands of Ugandan families into destitution.

And it keeps coming back, causing half a billion dollars' worth of damage in Africa every year.



4 DISEASE-RESISTANT BANANAS

THE ANSWER? A SUPER-BANANA. No ordinary banana can resist BXW, and no biochemical agent will stop it. So the Nigeria-based International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, and the National Agricultural Research Organisation in Uganda, inserted genetic material from sweet pepper—known to be effective in engineering disease-resistant rice—into a variety of banana.

The injected plant proteins rapidly kill cells that come into contact with BXW, preventing it from spreading.

Scientists are now conducting field trials. If they are successful, the new variety will be available to farmers within three years.

5 DROUGHT-HARDY MAIZE

CLIMATE CHANGE IS BECOMING A FRIGHTENING REALITY in many parts of the world. The UN Development Programme predicts that droughts will reduce Africa's production of maize (which feeds 300 million of its poorest people) by ten percent by 2050.

But the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research in Montpellier, France, and the Mexico-based International Maize and Wheat Improvement Centre have mixed and matched numerous samples from international gene banks to create several maize varieties that don't mind much if there's little rain.

PHILIP NGOLANIA, A SMALLHOLDER IN MACHAKOS, KENYA, planted some of the first high-tech seeds last February. Kenya is seeing its worst drought for a decade, with maize crops failing completely—but his one-third-hectare plot produced 360 kilos. "This harvest will feed me and my family for nine months," he says. "Without the new seed, I'd have nothing—like my neighbours."

The drought-hardy maize should increase production by up to 30 percent for around 40 million farmers. ■



THE KIT YOU NEED

Full down suit (this one's by Marmot): this is like wearing an eiderdown from top to toe. Usually worn above 6700 metres, this suit keeps the climber warm and dry en route to the summit. The only disadvantage? You need a trapdoor sewn into the rear for going to the loo!

Oxygen mask and reservoir bottle: the bottle at David's side fills as he breathes out to maximize the oxygen drawn in from the cylinder (on his back). The mask includes one inlet for pure oxygen and another for ambient air, plus an exhaust valve to breathe out of.

Climbing harness and ascending device: the ratchet device at David's waist enables him to climb fixed ropes the team sets up as they climb. Ropes are used from the North Col (7000 metres) to the summit.

Double boots: without these, David would lose all his toes. They consist of an inner pair of boots (where some climbers install electric boot warmers), and an outer plastic shell (leather would freeze).

Gina Waggott

David Hempleman-Adams is currently nearing the top of the highest mountain in the world. We talk to him to find out what it takes to get a team there—21st-century style

INSIDE AN EVEREST EXPEDITION

BY LOUISE JOHNCOX

"Everest is the big one," says David Hempleman-Adams, 54. "She's magnetic, majestic, awe-inspiring. Wanting to be on top of the world motivates many a mountaineer, but success can never be taken for granted."

Hempleman-Adams is speaking from Base Camp in Mount Everest, where, any day now, he hopes to lead a group of seven to the summit to help raise £1 million for Alzheimer's Research UK, and aid medical trials into high-altitude sickness. Given this medical research, the Duke of Edinburgh agreed to be patron of the expedition and the team was awarded the honour of carrying The Explorers Club flag.

"Planning a trip as a leader rather than a climber [Hempleman-Adams climbed Everest in 1993] is a major difference this time," he says. "I brought light, warm, high-tech gear and top-of-the-range technology. But at Base Camp we couldn't use the satellite phones because Everest was in the way! Four laptops died and only two mobiles worked. We had to get Chinese SIM cards powered by solar energy; if it wasn't sunny we had no signal.

"We had the best communications equipment in the world, but still occasionally had to send a yak herder off as a runner to ask for more coffee or whatever we needed!"

SO WHAT DO YOU NEED TO TAKE WITH YOU IF YOU WANT TO CLIMB EVEREST?...

THE ALL-IMPORTANT MESS TENT



21st-century advances mean that some climbers start their expedition in surprisingly comfortable conditions.

"We had by far the best mess tent at Base Camp!" says Hempleman-Adams of the luxury tent (shown above) where his team has been eating gourmet meals. The group even took a shower and toilet tent to Base Camp.

Hempleman-Adams chose an eclectic set of people to be part of his trip, including Iceland food group CEO Malcolm Walker, 65 (who brought chef Chris Bates with him); his son, Richard, 30; former Royal Air Force aerobatics team member Graham Duffy; and top mountaineer, Graham Hoyland, who'd already climbed Everest.

Base camp



ALL YOU CAN EAT

Communications manager Gina Waggott called us from Base Camp to tell us what the team has been eating:



High-calorie snacks (chocolate, nuts, biscuits). "At high altitude, your body literally starts to consume itself, so climbers need extra calories to keep going. On the day they go to the summit, they will burn more than 30,000 calories. The Kendal Mint Cake was given to us as a present because it was taken on Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay's successful expedition to Everest in 1953."

Juice powder, tea and coffee. "To combat altitude sickness, climbers should drink three litres or more a day. As water can get very boring, we try to spice it up with different kinds of tea or juice. You'll notice what the lack of air pressure and altitude has done to the Tang bag. Exploding bags of food are a common problem at altitude!"

Chilli sauce or spices. "Loss of appetite is also common at altitude, and food can taste bland and unpalatable. We often stir salt, pepper or chilli into our food just to make it interesting."

Tinned meat and fish. "We obviously have no access to fresh meat here, and even if we had, it would freeze and heat up during the daily weather cycles and spoil quickly. Sherpas eat little meat, but we try to slip some into our stews and soups to keep protein levels up."

Loxton's expedition sous-vide food. "This gourmet food is what makes this expedition special, and keeps our morale up. At base camp we were happily tucking into these meals most days."



Advanced base camp

Special thanks to Gina Waggott, Justin Packshaw, Graham Hoyland and Graham Duff for all the pictures taken on Mount Everest.

THE UNDERWEAR THAT REALLY MATTERS

Woolly or beanie hat: the ears must always be covered, and most climbers wear a beanie all day and even all night in bed!

Head torch: most power is solar, so this is a vital piece of gear for climbers stumbling around the camp at night, and also on summit day—for a dawn summit the departure time is around 10pm the night before.

Glacier or polarized sunglasses: you can go snow-blind in less than 30 minutes without these, resulting in excruciating pain for days. The UV levels at altitude are extreme.

Oxygen mask connected to regulator: on the summit of Everest, the air pressure is a third of that at sea level, so you need supplementary oxygen. This is usually used above 6700 metres.

Thermal base layer: draws sweat away from the skin, otherwise it freezes on your skin and could lead to hypothermia.

Ice axe: used on and around glaciers for cutting steps, and also to help break a fall.

Waterproof salopettes/overtrousers: these high-cut trousers keep your kidneys warm and act as an additional waterproof layer.

Down mitts: usually worn over another two pairs of gloves to prevent frostbite in extreme cold temperatures.

Corsair memory stick: most climbers take hundreds of pictures or videos and back them up on one of these, because they're virtually indestructible, and computers often fail at altitude.

Handheld GPS: vital for locating the start of routes or sharing interesting waypoints up the mountain. Also prevents climbers from losing their way in a storm.

12-point crampons: this is a four-wheel drive for humans; these spikes will grip an ice slope almost vertically. Just don't wear them inside a tent.

Gina Waggott



PAINTING EVEREST

Alan Cotton is with the team as the official expedition artist.

"Everest is a totally new experience for me," he says. "It's the drama of it that appeals. I'm painting the whole landscape, including places nearby like the Rongbuk Monastery.

"I'm paying particular attention to the colour, light and shade of the mountain and keeping a visual diary that's a combination of notes and drawings. I do some A3 drawings using different coloured pens and make some written colour notes to translate into paintings in my studio back at home. I also have some watercolours with me to help capture the changing light. I love the early-morning light here.

"I'm protecting my hands from the cold by wearing silk under-gloves and medium-thick gloves—and I'll also be taking some chemical hand warmers!"

The Everest Exhibition will be at Messum's Fine Art Gallery in London from September 12 to October 1, 2012.

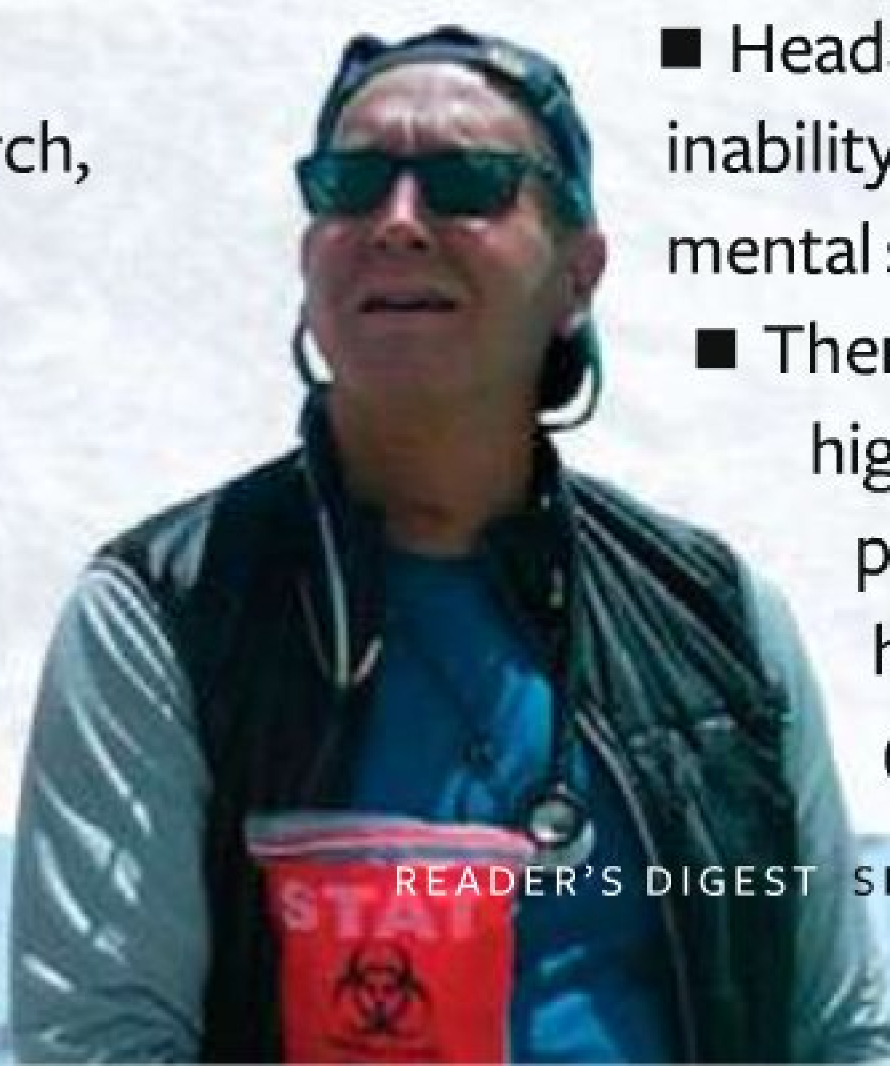
WHAT HAPPENS TO THE BODY AT HIGH ALTITUDE?

David Hempleman-Adams invited world high-altitude medical specialist Dr George Rodway (pictured), who is a professor at Utah University, USA, to be responsible for ensuring the health and safety of his expedition team. In collaboration with the US Army Institute of Environmental Medical Research, Dr Rodway is testing how the body works with an essential amino acid called leucine. The aim is to improve soldiers' performance in high-altitude environments, such as Afghanistan.

"We have two food bars," says Dr Rodway. "One is a placebo and the other contains leucine. We expect to find that the team members who had the leucine bar will maintain their muscle mass better."

The body goes through a number of changes at high altitude including:

- Headaches, nausea, vomiting, an inability to walk straight and a decline in mental status if you become ill.
- There are two basic types of high-altitude illness: high-altitude pulmonary edema (HAPE) and high-altitude cerebral edema (HACE); both are potentially





fatal. Pulmonary edema occurs when the tiny air sacs in the lung, the alveoli, fill with fluid that leaks out of small blood vessels, and the movement of the blood through the heart becomes pressurized; if there's a constriction of the pulmonary veins at high altitude you can drown in your own fluid. This is as deadly as cerebral edema, which causes swelling and fluid collection in brain tissue, compressing the brain, and the individual may lapse into a coma.

■ The key to success on a mountain like Everest is staying healthy. Explains Dr Rodway: "When you climb in developing countries, there is a range of illnesses that can sideline plans. To avoid altitude sickness we took daily acclimatization treks from Base Camp. We climbed 300 to 600 metres then returned to the camp. Over the course of two weeks we started moving up to Advanced Base Camp, which is almost 6400 metres up, and then slowly climbed further up."

■ Viagra can enhance physical performance on Everest. Says Rodway, "In a high-altitude environment Viagra works in the same way as for erectile dysfunction; the drug dilates the pulmonary vessels, so more blood can move into the pulmonary veins to improve the exchange of oxygen in the lungs—and the blood-oxygen level can be kept much higher." ■

The Day the UN Boss Rode in My Jeep

It happened, really, in three acts—my experience with the late Dag Hammarskjöld

BY JHAN ROBBINS

FROM OUR AUGUST 1962 ISSUE

The author, Jhan Robbins, was a noted biographer who wrote a few books, besides several articles for Reader's Digest and other magazines. Dag Hammarskjöld, a Swede, was the second secretary-general of the United Nations and a noted adventurer. He was killed in a plane crash while on a 1961 peace mission to the Congo.

ACT ONE. I was preparing an article about international negotiations, and had an appointment with the secretary-general of the United Nations late one afternoon in his office on the 38th floor of the UN secretariat building. Seasoned diplomatic reporters warned me that my quarry was shy, reticent and rather formal—a difficult subject.

To my surprise, Dag Hammarskjöld greeted me in shirt sleeves, smoking a pipe instead of his usual small cigar. As he rose to shake my hand, I saw that he was taller, thinner and blonder than he appeared on television.

He motioned me to a table at one end of the room, and we went quickly to the subject at hand. In answer to my questions, he spoke with force and conviction about the importance of the United Nations, what it had already accomplished and what he hoped for its future.

"Let us not make the mistake," he said, "of undervaluing the mediation and conciliation that go on here among nations every day. In some small way

injured pride is comforted, anger is harmlessly vented, conflict ends in compromise."

As our discussion drew to a close, the telephone rang. From the conversation I gathered that a man with whom Hammarskjöld had planned to have dinner had been taken ill. He looked disappointed. Amazed at my temerity, I blurted, "I'd be honoured if you'd have dinner with me."

I expected the secretary-general to refuse. Instead, he said heartily, "Fine idea!"

As we walked down the hall, I told him that I lived nearly 100 kilometres from New York City, that I had missed my train that morning and had come here in our old red jeep.

"A red jeep!" he said. "Imagine!" Racking my brain for a restaurant to suggest for dinner, I started to describe a small place I had recently discovered where excellent Creole food was served.

"Ah, Creole!" he exclaimed. "Shrimp and rice. Let's go there. I have dismissed my chauffeur, but we can ride in your red jeep."

"It's completely disreputable," I spluttered. " The side curtains are off, and it bucks in low gear, and ... " Hammarskjöld, with a twinkle in his pale blue eyes, put a hand on my shoulder. "Courage!" he said.

ACT TWO. As we chugged towards the restaurant in rush hour traffic, a horn blasted sharply at me from behind. Then a taxi shot past me on the left and, suddenly, cut to the right across my bow. I leaned on my horn, jammed on the brakes, twisted my wheel to the right—and ran up on the pavement. Hitting a metal waste container, which clanged like Big Ben,



the jeep carrying the secretary-general of the United Nations—and me—came to rest against a lamppost.

Incredibly, no damage was done.

The taxi came to a halt, and its driver started striding towards me.

Before he reached me, I snapped at him, "Why didn't you signal? Couldn't you see you were cutting me off? What kind of a fool driver are you?"

The cabby bellowed, "What do you mean by all that blasted honking? What's the matter, you blind or something? Where's your brains?"

He demanded to see my licence. I showed it to him, and demanded to see his. He snorted, "These days they give licences to everybody. Even guys like you!"

My embarrassment turned to rage.

"You could have killed us all, you maniac!" I shouted.

Now both of us had retreated to extreme positions. I could see the cabby's muscles tensing. I planted my feet firmly on the pavement. A crowd had begun to gather. The taxi driver turned his back on me and began to talk to Hammarskjöld. "If I was you, I wouldn't ride with this guy," he said contemptuously. "He's just a country driver—he and that jeep should have stayed in the sticks where they belong."

I was about to make an indignant reply when Hammarskjöld said quietly, "It must be tough driving a cab all day every day in this town. I'm glad I don't have to do it—I couldn't stand it. I'm surprised there aren't more accidents!"

I could see that the cabdriver was taken aback. Here was someone talking to him sympathetically.

"Yeah," he said, "it is tough. If it isn't the other drivers, it's the snow or the rain or the cops or the trucks. You can't win. It's always tough driving in this town!"

I had been ready to continue the argument, but now, perhaps, I could back off a little, too. "It sure is tough," I said feelingly. "I'm glad I don't have to drive here more than a couple of times a month."

Hammarskjöld murmured in my direction, "I'm sure your job has its hazards too."

"I guess I was rattled having you in the jeep, sir," I said. "Maybe I was a little careless."

Hammarskjöld turned to the taxi driver. "My friend feels he may have been a little careless."

"Aw, maybe I did crowd him," the cabby admitted. "I suppose I should have realized he was an out-of-state driver. He probably doesn't understand New York signals."

I was about to tell him I had been born and brought up in New York and had held a driver's licence there for 15 years. But it suddenly dawned on me that Dag Hammarskjöld, in order to calm down two near-belligerents in a minor traffic incident, was using the arbitration formula for international negotiations he had described to me earlier!

"The arbitrator must always keep

three things in mind," he had said in his precise way.

"One: Do not be dismayed if a situation seems irreconcilable. After all, if both sides aren't shouting dangerous threats at each other, the arbitrator is not needed. The important first step is to establish sympathetic relations with both parties and to remain in contact while the initial swordrattling goes on.

"Two: Try to persuade the angry parties to vent a sizable portion of their anger on some impersonal, abstract target. Different shades of meaning in language, the inescapable pressures of economics or even the psychological effect of climatic conditions can be used to 'air-condition' a serious quarrel.

"Three: Find some area of mutual concern that will draw both parties into a positive discussion. It may be utterly irrelevant to the problem at hand, but once you get them to say something like, 'There's a grain of truth in that,' there is an excellent chance that a harmonious solution may ultimately be reached.

"It's amazing," he had concluded, "but history shows that two countries which have been persuaded to retreat from the verge of war can often become good friends, even help one another."

Gradually, remembering these things, I stopped scowling. The cabby's bluster ebbed, too. "I guess we both got to watch out a little sharper," he said. I nodded. He retreated to his cab.

Apologizing profusely to Hammarskjöld, I backed off the kerb and we started going towards the restaurant again.

ACT THREE. About ten blocks later the jeep's engine sputtered. I glanced at my petrol gauge. The needle pointed to EMPTY.

"Damned, this is it!" I said miserably, forgetting diplomatic language. "I've really messed things up!"

I coasted to the kerb, yanked on the hand brake and suggested that we go to the restaurant by taxi. Just as I yelled, "Taxi!" a cab pulled up. It was the same driver with whom we'd had the run-in a few minutes earlier.

"You guys in trouble again?" he asked.

"Out of petrol," I said glumly. "Hop in," he said. "There's a petrol pump up ahead."

Hammarskjöld elected to stay with the jeep. As we drove along, the cabby said, "That's a nice guy you got riding with you. A quiet fellow, but really nice."

At the petrol pump, he waited while I bought a canful of fuel, then drove me back to my stalled car. I reached for my wallet, but I saw that the metal lever on his meter was still up—the fare had not been registered.

"It's on me," he said. "Forget it!" Waving cheerfully, he drove away.

In the light of all that has happened since, this ride with Dag Hammarskjöld may not have been earth-shakingly significant. But I tend to think about it surprisingly often, however. Maybe you will, too. ■

British Prime Minister David Cameron announced that he wanted to outlaw the practice of forced marriages in the UK—but one tiny government agency had already been fighting the good fight

Untying the Knot

BY TIM BOUQUET

On June 15th last year, the phone rang in a small room four floors up in the Foreign & Commonwealth Office—the headquarters of Britain's Forced Marriage Unit (FMU). It was the police. Amina*, a 16-year-old Birmingham girl, had gone on holiday to her family's home in Pakistan, but had been reported missing after sending her friend Khalida* a desperate SMS: "I wana come back but ma dad isn't gonna let me," it read. "Please help I beg u."

Thirty-five-year-old FMU caseworker Lucy Torrington contacted Khalida immediately. Amina had happily gone to Pakistan, Khalida reported, only for her father to suddenly order her to marry a cousin she barely knew. "Hes taken passprt," she'd SMSed.

Amina hadn't heard of the FMU—whose job it is to rescue British nationals coerced into marriages in Britain and abroad—and might be frightened by a call or message from a stranger, so Lucy asked Khalida to text her to try to find out where she was.

At first, Amina didn't reply. "You're always terrified that the father has discovered the phone and the lifeline's gone," Lucy says.

But, a couple of days later, Amina gave the name of a village some 128 kilometres north of Islamabad. She couldn't give an

* Names changed to protect privacy

DECLAN WALSH



exact address, but she could describe the house.

The FMU contacted Albert David, head of the Assistance Unit in Britain's Pakistani High Commission, whose team works with the FMU on around 150 cases every year. He knew he didn't have much time to find Amina.

"When a victim arrives in Pakistan, everything's usually already arranged between the families and the marriage happens very quickly," he says.

David sent a Pakistani colleague to make undercover enquiries in the village as to exactly where the family were living. Once he had a firm address, David sent two assistance-unit caseworkers to the house, with a local police car at a discreet, but clearly visible, distance.

The police presence was enough. Amina's father Rashid* might have been able to push his daughter into an unwanted relationship, but he had no desire to take on the legal authorities—and the 16-year-old was handed over to the caseworkers. She was too tired and terrified for tears.

"Please don't send me back to my mum," she begged. "She'll side with my dad."

Back in the UK, she was placed with foster parents and, so far, remains safe.

But, though Amina's case ended relatively well, it's just one example of a huge problem that the six staff at the FMU—which was created in 2005 after a spate of high-profile honour killings—are trying desperately to combat. Every year, usually in tandem with overseas consular staff and support groups, they attempt to help around 1700 British youngsters in similar—and much worse—situations to Amina's.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO BE TRAPPED IN A FORCED MARRIAGE?

A survivor and volunteer at Karma Nirvana, a support group, tells her story:

At 21, I married a Christian man without my Sikh parents' consent. When they found out, they "arrested" us—locked my husband up overnight and kidnapped me under sedation, with help from the family doctor.

They took me from my home in southwest England to India and kept me there for two years. I wasn't allowed to go out or make friends.

Eventually, I was forced to marry a stranger and sponsor him to come to Britain. I felt like his meal ticket. He was an alcoholic and very abusive—he beat me up, and would strangle and suffocate me.

I realized I was pregnant, but ended up in hospital and lost the child. Then, when I told my husband I wanted out of the marriage, he threatened to kill me because he said I'd dishonoured him. I managed to escape by going to my doctor who gave me the numbers for domestic-violence services, and they helped me into a refuge.

This whole experience has traumatized me and I've spent time in a mental-health unit.

I'm 33 now and, by sharing my experiences with victims of forced marriage, I can tell them that they're not alone and that help is out there.



“If 2000 white girls disappeared off school registers every summer term, this issue would be top of the agenda.”

DECLAN WALSH

The FMU has the power, through a Forced Marriage Protection Order (FMPO), to prevent unlawful unions or remove victims if the marriage has already taken place. Almost 300 such orders were issued between November 2008, when they were introduced, and February 2011—and they usually work. In February of last year, Lydia Erhire, a “devout Christian” from east London, was the first person to be jailed for breaching an order after refusing to retrieve her 17-year-old son Edirin from Nigeria, where he was promised to an unknown girl. He eventually came back in June.

Although the FMU rarely fails to locate a youngster, the tricky bit is rescuing them before they come to major harm.

In August last year, 17-year-old Komal*, a pupil at a high school in east London, disappeared. She'd told a teacher and social workers that she was in danger of a forced union, but, when challenged, her parents had sworn that they'd never do such a thing. Yet the next her friends knew was that Komal had somehow sent one of them a text message saying that her family had taken her to an unknown location in Bangladesh, hidden her passport and smashed her phone.

The FMU were alerted and contacted Bangladeshi immigration officials and consular staff in Dhaka to see if there was a record of Komal's arrival in the country, and whether she or her family had given an address.

They did not know if Komal had travelled by plane, boat or over land and, with thousands of arrivals in Bangladesh that week, there was a long trail to follow. But, after about four days of scanning records, they had details of both Komal's entry into the country and the village she was heading to.

“So far, not so good,” Lucy says. There were two villages in the country with the same name. One of them had just flooded, and if Komal had been evacuated she could have been anywhere. Consular staff were despatched to both villages—in one case, by boat.

Luckily, Komal was in the non-flooded village, but the short delay in finding her meant that her rescuers were too late. Not only was she already married, but she'd been raped by her "spouse" and badly beaten. One of her assailants was her mother. Back in Britain, Komal has returned to school and hopes an FMPO will stop her parents coming near her.

Fortunately, most cases don't end as badly as this, but even when the FMU gets to victims before such abuse is meted out, the youngsters still face a massive uphill struggle to recover from their ordeal. "They often have to begin a new life with a new identity, leaving behind family, cutting all ties with friends, and changing schools or jobs," says joint FMU head Ben Rawlings.

So the unit works very closely with support groups, such as Leeds-based Karma Nirvana, which was set up in 1993 by 45-year-old Jasvinder Sanghera, who ran away from an arranged marriage—and her family—aged just 17.

This UK Ministry of Justice-funded body helps organize refuges and safe houses, and advises victims on counselling, legal and financial assistance. It also alerts the FMU when callers to its helpline—which received 5000 calls last year—are in imminent danger of being taken overseas.

But the work of the FMU and its affiliated organizations may only be tackling a fraction of what could be thousands of forced marriages, and Ben Rawlings acknowledges that raising awareness of the issue is key to preventing abuse. So FMU and Karma Nirvana staff spend much of their time giving talks to schools, conferences and other organizations.

But, though the UK government has issued guidelines for health professionals, social workers, police and teachers to help them identify and respond to victims, there's still a long way to go before forced marriages are tackled with the same urgency or seriousness as, say, other domestic violence.

"Last year, we took roadshows, where victims spoke, all over the country," says Jasvinder Sanghera, "and 75 percent of the professionals attending had never heard of the Forced Marriage Act.

"If 2000 white girls disappeared off school registers every summer term, this issue would be top of the agenda," she continues. "This can't be dismissed as a 'Muslim' or an 'Asian' problem. It's our problem. It isn't part of anybody's culture to be abused."

THE NEVER-ENDING BATTLE

As I approached the supermarket, a woman grabbed the cart near the door and asked, "Do you want this?"

"No," I said. "I'm only here for one thing." As she walked away, I heard her mutter, "Typical male."

Barry Pippen



Presents **EXCLUSIVE POLL**



Health-Conscious Indians Speak Out

Recently, Reader's Digest India conducted an online health poll to find out how much importance people actually accord to health, fitness and eating right. While there are a number of concerns on the health front, what's heartening is that attitudes are changing for the better.

The incidence of lifestyle-related diseases has been increasing rapidly over the last few years. Health experts, through various forms of media, have been continuously stressing on the importance of having a balanced diet, and exercising regularly in order to lead a healthy and active life.

The 660 persons who responded to the poll from all over India included men and women ranging in age from 20 to 60. They comprise students, professionals, homemakers and the self-employed.

5 Points for a Healthy lifestyle



1 A balanced diet is the right combination of Carbohydrates, Proteins and Fats and also includes essential minerals and vitamins.

2 Weight loss and physical activity are keys to a healthy lifestyle.

3 Junk food may be tempting, but try to minimize your portions.

4 Ensure your daily diet has enough of fibre.

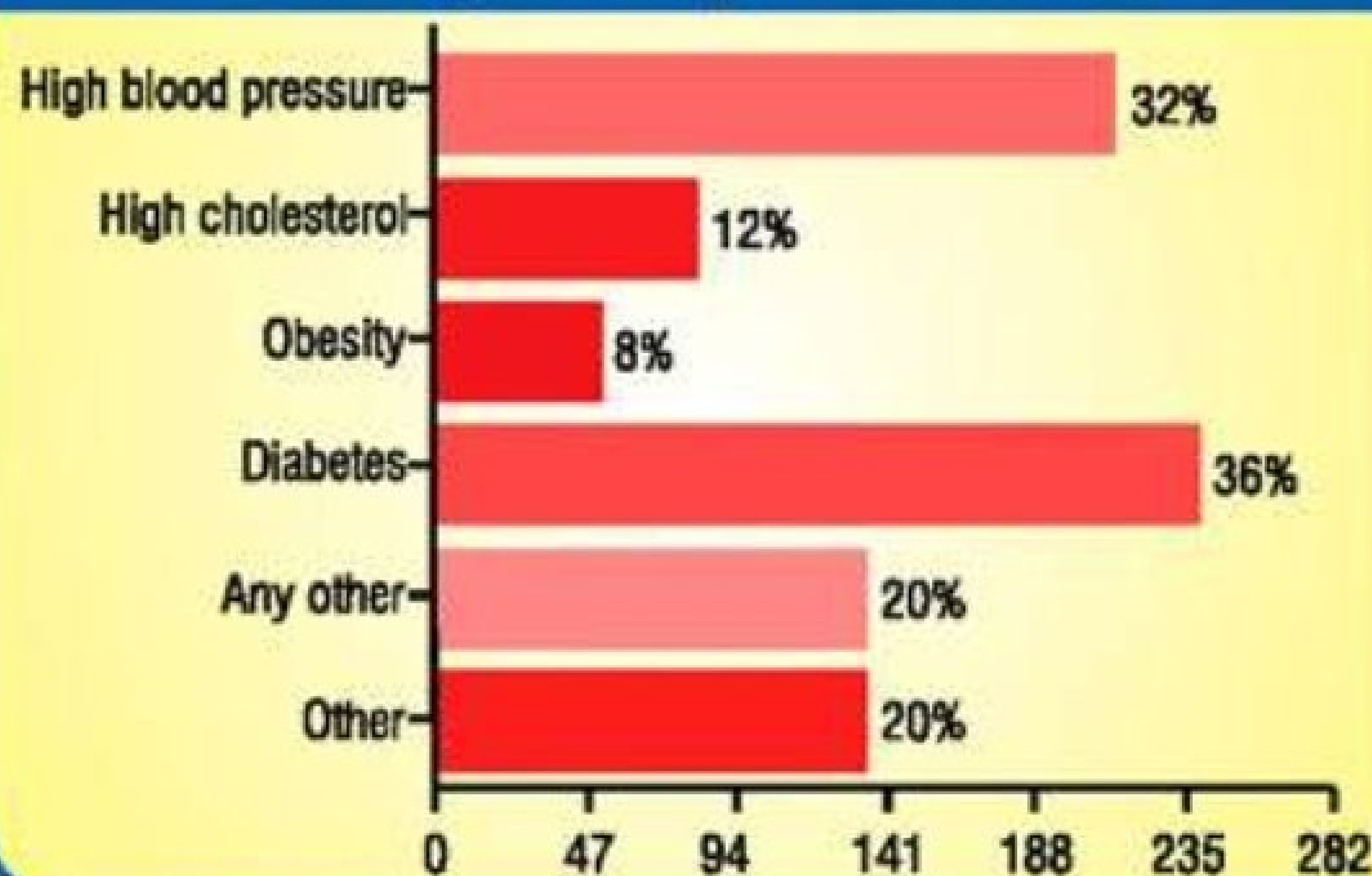
5 Drink as much of fluids as possible but avoid those which have high amount of sugar.

Concern for your health

Peer pressure and greater emphasis on healthy living do seem to have contributed towards encouraging people to adopt a healthier lifestyle. As per our survey, 56 per cent people consciously take care of their well being, while 32 per cent believe that they are fit but should make time to exercise and remain fit. *"It is a welcome trend," says nutritionist Siddhi Bansal. It is an indication that people are beginning to take their health seriously. Still, considering the high stress levels and lifestyle-related diseases prevalent today, it is imperative to have a health checkup once every six months in order to detect signs of any disorders or lurking infections in time," she notes.*

Frequency of health checkups

While 34 per cent of the respondents said they go for a medical checkup once in six months, 25 per cent opt for a checkup annually. What is alarming is that a high 38 per cent get their medical checkup done only if required – mostly when their doctors ask them to do so following a health scare. "People tend to take their health for granted. The stress levels we are seeing today are several times higher than what we saw just a decade ago. Moreover, the sedentary jobs we have today and our penchant for gorging on junk food have only made matters worse," says general physician Dr Dheeraj Mehta from Mumbai.



*People may select more than one check box, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

Keep track of family history

Diabetes and high blood pressure are the two most common ailments that figure prominently in our respondents' family

history. "These two are the biggest long-term killers, if you ask me. The worrying factor is that while their incidence is increasing, the age at which these disorders are being detected, is coming down. Rising consumption of junk food, high consumption of processed foods, heavy use of oil in cooking, lack of exercise and high-stress sedentary jobs have begun to show their effects. We are seeing many cases of diabetes and hypertension in young people in the 18-25 age group, which wasn't so common earlier. No one can predict the occurrence of such diseases. But you need to be more careful if you have a family history of such disorders," says Dr Mehta.

How Physically active are you in everyday Life?	
Active Lifestyle	48%
Moderately Active	46%
Sedentary Lifestyle	6%

How much time do you spend exercising every week?	
2-3 hours of exercise	42%
2-5 hours of exercise	22%
More than 5 hours	13%
Don't exercise at all	24%

*People may select more than one check box, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

Exercise, stay active

"Brisk walks, cardio workouts, regular exercise and the right diet keeps the body fit. Just like you spend time for a bath and your meals daily, this should be a part of your daily regimen," cites Mumbai-based physical trainer Jayaraj Deshmukh. As per our survey, 41 per cent of our respondents spend about two hours or less exercising every week, while another 23 per cent work out for two to five hours. Almost a quarter of our respondents don't exercise at all. Only a scanty 13 per cent of our respondents exercise for more than five hours a week. "That's certainly not enough. Exercise is not just important to keep health problems at bay. It raises your energy levels and builds your stamina. You automatically feel healthier," Deshmukh points out.

Kolkata-based Nishat Parween, who has started walking short distances instead of travelling by vehicles, started yoga and is adopting a healthier diet, couldn't agree more. Meanwhile, Prasenjit Sarkar of Durgapur opt for an active life with regular walks and sleep early to ensure at least seven hours of rest.

5 Points on Cholesterol



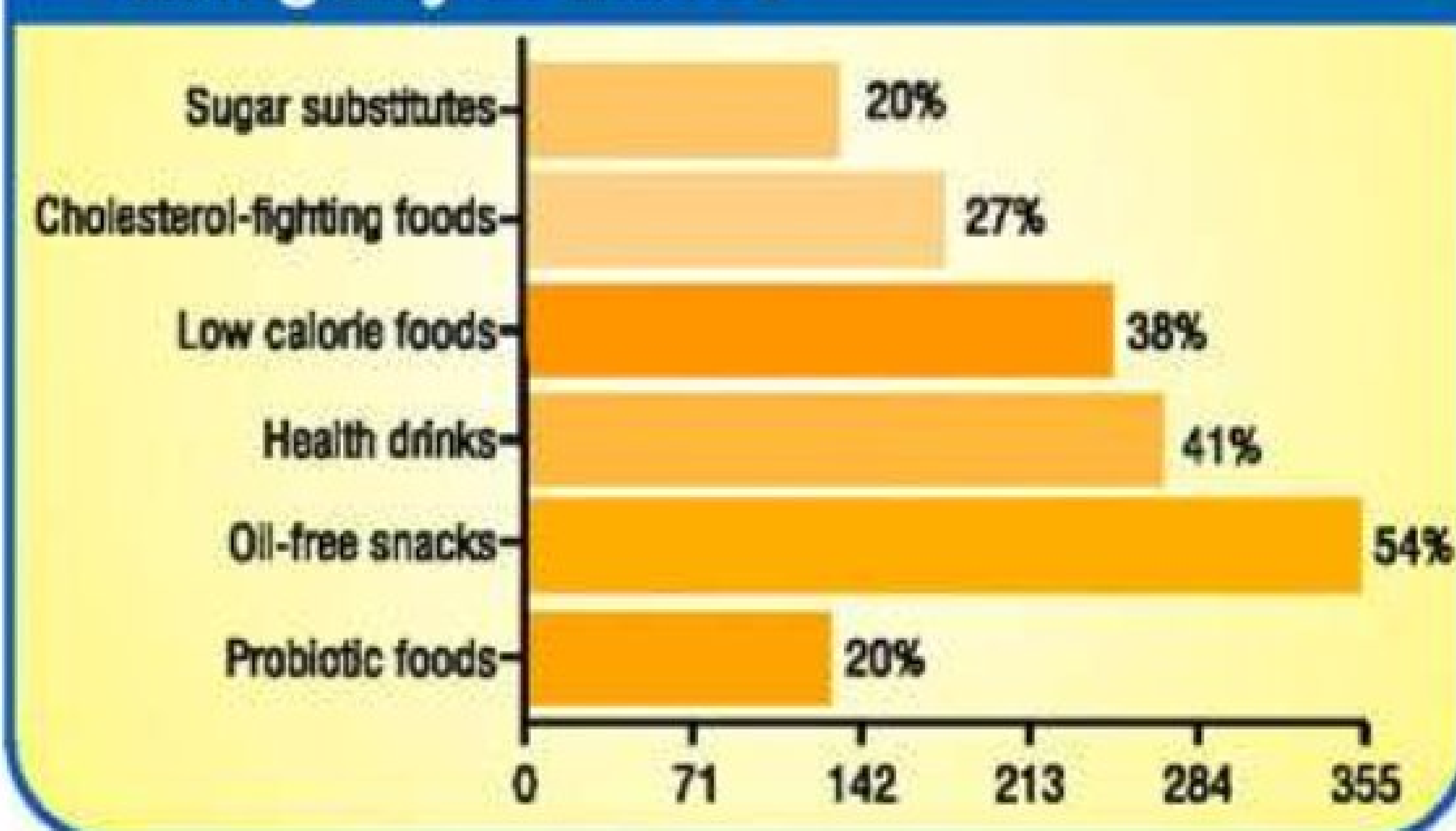
1. Cholesterol is an essential component of our blood and is generated within our body. Any amount exceeding this requirement is likely to cause harm.
2. It is important for you to know your total cholesterol and how it is affecting your health. Maintain a proper balance of low levels of LDL and high levels of HDL.
3. Fats from vegetable source will never have cholesterol.
4. Polyunsaturated fats and Monounsaturated fats are known to decrease bad cholesterol.
5. Heart disease due to high blood cholesterol is curable but better avoidable.

Fitness first

Going by their doctors' advice or plainly out of fitness concerns, people are now switching to healthier habits and are reaping the benefits. *"I dance a lot to stay fit and healthy and consume low-calorie foods, health drinks, oil-free snacks, etc," says Priyanka Bhatt from Mumbai.* Some others prefer to opt for reduced oil and sugar intake, or eat more fruit and vegetables.

Nutrition and nourishment

Most packed foods these days provide information on nutrition – calorie content, carbohydrates, fats, proteins, etc. As many as 85% of respondents said they check food packaging for nutrition information. "That is one way you can keep track of what you are consuming. Secondly, that also helps you stay clear of foods that have high sodium content, cholesterol, and so on. Flavoured chips and wafers, for instance, have high sodium content. These are a strict no-no for patients with hypertension," says Bansal. These days there are varieties of healthy food substitutes that are available in the market. You have sugar substitutes, cholesterol-fighting foods, low calorie foods, health drinks, oil-free snacks and probiotic foods. Our survey indicates that these are also gaining popularity. Following their doctors' advice, some of our respondents opt for healthy substitutes.



*People may select more than one check box, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

Regular health tests and screenings

Regular health exams and tests can help find problems before they start. They also can help find problems early, when your chances for treatment and cure are better. "By getting

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If needed will you consider going overseas for medical treatment?	
Yes	53%
No	47%
Aliments for which you will consider availing medical treatment abroad.	
Cancer	47%
Heart Disease	32%
Malfunction of the Eye	16%
Neurological surgery/treatment	29%
Cosmetic surgery	19%
Pregnancy / Childbirth	14%

*People may select more than one check box, so percentages may add up to more than 100%.

the right health services, screenings, and treatments, you are taking steps that help your chances for living a longer, healthier life. Your age, health and family history, lifestyle choices (i.e. what you eat, how active you are, whether you smoke, drink, binge), and other important factors impact what and how often you need healthcare," explains health consultant and nutritionist Dr Kalpana Pednekar from Mumbai. "Taking proper care of your health at the right time can prevent a lot of problems in the future. In adults up to about 40 years, a check-up every year is fine. Older adults should be checked every six months," she adds. While we have progressed manifold in terms of medical technologies and treatments available, our respondents say they would rather choose to go abroad and avail of treatment for diseases like cancer, malfunction of the heart or neurological disorders. "There's a misconception that we do not have the technology or the skills to treat patients suffering from such diseases. That's not true. We have a number of premier institutes and reputed multi-speciality hospitals that can ably tackle these diseases today," states Dr Mehta.

Insurance – What are you waiting for?

Having medical insurance has almost become a necessity these days given rising medical costs and the increasing incidence of lifestyle diseases. *"People should realise that while they pay a small amount like Rs 8,000 to 10,000 as premium, the benefits in the event of an emergency are huge. At that time, spending a large sum doesn't strain your finances as medical insurance comes to your rescue. If there is no emergency, it is quite a small amount spent towards your well-being. After all, there is no wealth without health,"* says Mumbai insurance agent Raman Kukreja. ■

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NO MORE DENTAL WOES

Taking care of oral health will not just keep your teeth healthy, but will also help in keeping more serious ailments at bay.

While awareness on oral health and hygiene has been increasing in India, dental checkups still do not take precedence for most people. And some have even had to pay a hefty price for it. Bangalore-based Aditya Chakrapani, who works with an IT firm, ignored his persistent toothache for over six months. Later, when the pain in his tooth was unbearable, he trudged to a dentist's clinic, only to be informed that he would have to lose his tooth. The damage to the jawbone was also extensive.

Doctors say that Indians have much to learn in this respect. "Unlike general health checkups, people are very irregular with dental checkups. Most Indians have gum problems that go unnoticed. They end up at the clinic only when there is pain or decay. That needs to change," says Dr Johnson Bandi, Dental Surgeon, FMS Dental Hospital, Hyderabad. Also, unlike the West where the usage of mouthwash and floss is very high, most people here tend to ignore these, leading to a high incidence of dental problems.

"Dental decay or cavities is one of the most common dental diseases affecting the young as well as the old in our country. Sweets and chocolates alone do not cause dental caries. Even biscuits, bananas, wafers, sandwiches and a wide variety of foods are responsible. Any food that sticks to the tooth and remains there for more than 20 minutes

can cause dental decay," warns renowned aesthetic and cosmetic dentist Dr Sandesh Mayekar.

Dr Bandi concurs that there is a misconception that eating more chocolates leads to tooth decay. "Even if you eat chocolates at night, it is fine, provided you brush your teeth before going to bed. When you eat a chocolate and then sleep without brushing your teeth, the bacteria start acting up as the mouth is closed for a long while. The bacteria releases acids that affect tooth enamel," he points out.

"Another dental disease which is quite rampant is gingivitis, which destroys the tissues supporting the teeth, the gums, the periodontal ligaments and the tooth sockets. Gingivitis can occur due to certain systemic diseases, hormonal changes during pregnancy, uncontrolled diabetes, and use of certain medications, but, to a great degree, it occurs due to poor dental hygiene," adds Dr Mayekar.

Doctors say that, ideally, the first visit to a dentist should be scheduled when the milk teeth erupt, when a baby is around six months old. The next important stage is when the milk teeth begin to fall and permanent teeth start erupting. This is a very important stage as the early removal of milk teeth can even misalign the permanent teeth that are yet to come. For adults, a visit to the dentist every six months is a must—to check for any possible decay, gum disease or other problems. Apart from this, regular brushing, flossing and using a good mouthwash can keep your teeth clean and healthy.

Dr Mayekar states, "To limit the bacteria that cause dental decay, it is important that we eat healthy foods. It is advisable to rinse the mouth after every snack or meal and observe a strict brushing and flossing routine. Just as we maintain our gadgets or cars for better service, we need to maintain good oral hygiene. The first step for maintaining good oral hygiene is using toothpaste, mouthwash and floss for total oral protection. And visit your dentist regularly for routine checkups."

TIPS FOR ORAL CARE

- Brush twice daily – morning and night
- Do not use hard brushes. Preferably opt for a soft brush as it is gentle on the gums.
- Floss your teeth daily after every meal and after snacking on any food that tends to stick in your teeth, especially sweets and chocolates.
- Use a fluoride mouth wash.
- A visit to the dentist every six months is a must.





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A diver comes upon a school of smallmouth grunts, a Caribbean reef fish, swimming past luminous sponges and corals that upholster the bridge of the US Coast Guard *Cutter Duane*. The ship was intentionally sunk in 1987 off Key Largo to create an artificial reef 40 metres deep. This practice of improving the marine ecosystem and increasing fish stock is still in use. On the previous page, officials dump a Chinese-made T-69 armoured tank into the Gulf of Thailand in August 2010.

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CREATURE COMFORT

A golden retriever did what one family could not—he befriended and soothed their raging son

BY MELISSA FAY GREENE

FROM *THE NEW YORK TIMES MAGAZINE*

MICHELE ASSELIN/CONTOUR

In May 1999, Donnie Winokur, 43, and her husband, Harvey Winokur, 49, beheld the son of their dreams, the child infertility denied them. Andrey, a pale dark-eyed one-year-old in a cotton baby suit, held in a standing position by a caregiver, appeared in a short videotape recorded in a Russian orphanage. If the couple liked the little boy they could begin the legal process of adopting him. They liked the little boy very much.

Four months later, the Winokurs flew to Russia from their home in Atlanta, USA, to adopt Andrey, whom they renamed Iyal, as well as an unrelated little girl two days younger, whom they named Morasha. The family arrived home to congratulations, gifts and helium balloons.

"Sometime after their third birthdays our wonderful fairy tale of adopting two Russian babies began to show cracks," says Donnie, now 55. Unlike bright and cheery Morasha, Iyal grew oppositional and explosive. He was a sturdy, big-hearted boy with a wide and open face, shiny black hair in a bowl cut and a winning giggle. But, triggered by the sight of a cartoon image on a plastic cup, or an encounter with Morasha's Barbie

dolls, he threw tantrums that shook the house. He stuffed himself at mealtimes with an inexplicable urgency. In a fast-moving car, he once unfastened his seat belt and tried to jump out. He awoke every night in a rage. In preschool, Iyal ploughed his tricycle into other children without remorse, or maybe without awareness. He tried to kiss strangers, or feel their toes. Friends who had assured the Winokurs, "He's all boy!" or "Mine was the same way!" began to fall silent, out of shared concern.

For more than a year after Iyal's third birthday, child psychiatrists, pediatricians and specialists examined him without reaching consensus. Finally he was seen by Alan G. Weintraub, a developmental pediatrician, who noted his small head, the small and widely spaced eye openings, the extra skin folds close to the nose and the way the middle area of his face appeared flattened. The doctor's conclusion was a blow the Winokurs had not seen coming: Though alcohol consumption by Iyal's birth mother could not be documented, available evidence pointed to fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS).

Iyal was intellectually impaired and at high risk for a range of secondary disabilities, including poor judgment, impulsive behaviour, social isolation, limited academic achievement, unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse, imprisonment, suicidal ideation, the inability to live independently and inappropriate sexual behaviour. Few medications or therapies could be recommended as truly effective.

At seven, eight and nine years of age, Iyal often babbled a non-stop stream of chatter and baby talk. He required a full-time aide at school and his mother's undivided attention in the house. Donnie, a writer and multimedia producer, put aside her career. Harvey, a rabbi, juggled the needs of hundreds of congregants while facing escalating mayhem at home.

"Thousands of dollars for a dog?" cried Harvey. "Instead of a nanny, or respite care, or private school? Does that make sense?"

As Donnie found her footing in the parallel universe of special-needs families, she discovered that a nonprofit service-dog agency in rural Ohio placed assistance dogs with autistic children. Could a service dog help Iyal? "Are you kidding me?" cried her husband. "We don't need a dog!" He felt that one more howl raised under their roof, one more living creature whining for attention, one more source of strife between the children would push him beyond endurance. "No, Donnie. It's too much. I couldn't take it."

"This could be the help we need,"



COURTESY OF WINOKUR FAMILY

Donnie and Harvey celebrate the adoption of their children in Moscow, August 1999.

she persisted.

"Forget about it, please," Harvey said. "It's me or a dog."

Karen Shirk operates a dog-training school in Xenia, Ohio, USA. Dressed in baggy jeans and a man's white T-shirt, swaying deeply as she walks, breathing through the metal button of a tracheotomy tube, she leads me into her office. We wade into a crowd of bouncing ecstatic papillons—toy dogs whose wide, silky ears inspired the breed's name, the French word for "butterfly." When Shirk, 49, reaches her desk chair, they settle on the floor at her feet, fold up their ears like kites and watch her. When she laughs, they take out their ears and wave them around.

Shirk founded the nonprofit corporation 4 Paws for Ability in 1998 after her own service dog, a black German shepherd named Ben, saved her life. He seemed to watch Shirk closely one evening when she returned to her apartment following open-heart surgery. "I had a daytime nurse but was alone at night," says Shirk, who suffers from myasthenia gravis, a rare neuromuscular disease. "I was on a morphine pump and—though I didn't realize it—a deadly combination of drugs. I slipped into unconsciousness." When the phone rang, Ben waited—as he'd been trained to do—for Shirk's command to answer it rather than to let it ring into the answering machine. But that night, with his owner failing, Ben picked up the receiver without her command, dropped it on the bed and barked and barked. It was Shirk's father on the line. Realizing something was wrong, he hung up and called the emergency number. The rescue team told Shirk she wouldn't have lived through the night.

Shirk had adopted Ben on her own, hiring a trainer to convert her puppy into a working animal. The existing

service-dog agencies had a policy of not giving dogs to people on ventilators, making Shirk ineligible. So she got into the service-dog business with the intention of getting trained dogs to people who wouldn't have access to them otherwise. "People started calling from all over to ask, 'Am I too young? Am I too old? Am I too disabled? Am I disabled enough?'" she says. "I said, 'If your life can be improved by a dog, and if you and your family can take good care of a dog, we're going to give you a dog'."

"Okay," Shirk said. "We'll need to see a doctor's prescription and we'll need video. We want to see your son every day, everywhere—getting up in the morning, eating breakfast, getting in a car, at school, at bedtime. We need to hear his noises and see his tantrums."

"You'll give us a dog?" Donnie gasped.

That night at home Harvey gasped, too. "Thousands of dollars for a dog?" he cried. "Instead of a nanny, or respite care, or private school? Does

In 2007, a phonecall came into 4 Paws from an Atlanta mother of a boy with special needs. "Do you place dogs with children who have fetal alcohol syndrome?" the mother asked Shirk.

"Never heard of it."

Donnie Winokur, who had by then founded the Georgia affiliate of the National Organization on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, explained with rapid and precise diction.

"Is your son likely to verbally abuse a dog?" Shirk asked.

"Well, yes," Donnie had to admit, at a reduced speed.

"Is he likely to try to physically abuse a dog?"

"It's not impossible," she said, now certain of rejection.



Iyal and Chancer, September 2009.

that make sense? A dog's not going to mean anything to Iyal."

"It might."

In January 2008, Donnie, her father, her first cousin and her children drove to Ohio for a ten-day class with other special-needs families and their new dogs. For children with autism or behaviour disorders, dogs were trained in "behaviour disruption." For children with seizure disorder, diabetes or respiratory issues, dogs were trained to alert the parents at the onset of an episode.

About ten percent of 4 Paws placements fail. "Some fail because parents weren't prepared for how much extra work a dog would be," Shirk says. Others fail because it's not a good match. A family's video may not have reflected the severity of behaviour. "A child looks gentle on his video, so we place a soft dog," Shirk says. "Then the child's violent meltdowns scare the dog, and he starts avoiding the child." Shirk tries to discourage clients from engaging in "the Lassie syndrome": the belief that a devoted, sensitive and brilliant dog will bound into their lives and make everyone feel better.

And yet, sometimes, that's what happens.

4 Paws matched Iyal with Chancer, a big, good-humoured golden retriever with "high self-esteem" who wouldn't feel hurt or insulted by the boy.

Donnie and Harvey were in a hard stretch with Iyal. He was throwing tremendous rages daily, and instantly did so at the dog-training circle. "I'm so sorry," Donnie said, mortified. But she was among friends; special-needs parents all, they patiently waited for Iyal's tantrum to die down.

At the conclusion of the second day's class, the families were invited to keep their dogs overnight for the first time. Donnie's cousin took Chancer outside for a walk while Donnie supervised Iyal and Morasha in a hot tub in the hotel's indoor pool area. "When they came back from their walk," she says, "Chancer looked around, and then broke away! I thought, *Oh my God, he's escaping. We're going to lose him.* He streaked past everybody in the solarium and took a flying leap into the hot tub. He was trying to save Iyal!"

Chancer had not been trained to do water rescue. Shirk thinks that after 36 hours Chancer had bonded to Iyal. The reverse, though, may not have been true yet. Part of the havoc wreaked by alcohol on a child's brain

The big dog lies on top of the boy he loves and seals him off from the dizzying and incomprehensible world for a while.

COURTESY OF WINOKUR FAMILY

is the scrambling of the emotional pathways. The routes to friendship, fun, intimacy and love are underdeveloped or buried behind cognitive roadblocks. But Iyal's burst of laughter when the big yellow dog came sailing through the air and clumsily splashed into the hot tub was the greatest sound his mother had heard out of him in a long time.

The morning after Chancer came home, the Winokurs woke up from a full night's sleep for almost the first time in a decade. They looked at each other in semi-horror: Was Iyal still alive? They found him snoozing beside the big yellow dog, the latter hogging the mattress. Since Chancer's arrival, they've rarely been disturbed in the night. Iyal may still wake up, but he's evidently reassured by the dog's presence and returns to sleep.

Chancer sometimes heads off tantrums before they start. If a tutor or a therapist has worked with Iyal in the dining room a bit too long, Chancer moves between the visitor and the boy, clearly relaying: We're done for today. From as far as two floors away he will alert, flicking his ears, tuning in. Sensing that Iyal is nearing a breaking point, he gallops up or down the stairs to find him, playfully head-butts and pushes him down to the floor, gets on top of him, stretches out and relaxes with a satisfied groan. Helplessly pinned under Chancer, Iyal resists, squawks and then relaxes, too. The big dog lies on top of the boy he loves and seals him off from the dizzying and incomprehensible world for a while.

Before Chancer, Iyal didn't seem to possess "theory of mind," the insight, usually achieved by age four, that other people have points of view different from your own. But Chancer has inspired him to consider what Chancer likes and what Chancer wants and what Chancer thinks. Only since the dog's arrival has Iyal shown sheepishness or regret following a tantrum, signalling a new awareness that his outbursts may affect others. "Is Chancer mad at me?" he asks his parents. "Mommy, tell Chancer I love him, okay?"

Donnie says, "Lately, and this is the best yet: If Iyal gets distressed, he goes to find Chancer, and he curls up next to him. He picks up Chancer's big paw and gets under it." It's the closest the boy has come to mood self-regulation.

Chancer has not cured Iyal. "From the moment Iyal wakes up in the morning, there's tension in the house," Donnie says. "He has neurological and psychological damage Chancer's paws can't reach. But Chancer mitigates the disability. It's like we have a nanny."

Not a full-time nanny, though. Chancer doesn't accompany Iyal to school because the boy can't take the reins as the dog's handler. If Iyal ordered Chancer to do a wrong or dangerous thing, or to join him in reckless behaviour, would Chancer recognize that they were transgressing? Would Chancer disobey his owner?



MICHELE ASSELIN/CONTOUR

Chancer offers kisses to Iyal while the Winokur family hangs out in the living room, October 2011.

With every passing year, the challenges to Iyal's safety, and to the well-being of those around him, multiply. Iyal is making attempts to touch his mother in inappropriate ways; the Winokurs fear that soon the principal's office will be calling them. "Harvey and I feel like we're sitting on a volcano," Donnie says. "Iyal is a 13-year-old who functions cognitively, emotionally and socially like an eight-year-old. That gap will widen. He will never catch up to his chronological age. And few outsiders perceive the difference between neurological non-competence and behavioural non-compliance; in other words, that Iyal's doing the best he can."

Chancer doesn't know Iyal is cognitively impaired. What he knows is Iyal is his boy. Chancer loves Iyal in a perfect way, with a love even more unconditional than what his family can offer him. Chancer never feels disappointed in Iyal or embarrassed by him. Beyond cognitive ability or disability, beyond predictions of a bright future or a dismal one, on a field of grass and hard-packed dirt, between the playground and the baseball field, you can see them sometimes, running, laughing their heads off, sharing a moment of enormous happiness, just a boy and his dog.

Inside every old woman is a young girl wondering what the hell happened.

Cora Harvey Armstrong

A bereaved father. A World War II survivor. A child mired in poverty. Three people whose lives are inextricably linked by a small charitable act

BY GARY SLEDGE

Connect

BONUS READ

edLives

Kenya. October 1969. Sven Magnusson was astonished by the chaos and colour of Nairobi. Men and women rushed in every direction, some in colourful tribal dress, others in pale western garb. Expectancy hung in the air as crowds from the countryside flooded the capital of the newly independent African nation looking for work.

Only in its fifth year of independence, Kenya was still recovering from the disastrous effects of the Mau Mau insurgency against British Rule.

Forty-year-old Sven, a veteran educator from Sweden, had uprooted his young family and brought them across the world to participate in Kenya's rebuilding. Principal of a teacher training college in Vasteras, Sweden, he had been deeply touched by people, particularly children, who had been uprooted in the long conflict. Education, he believed, was the key to Kenya's future.

When he was offered a job at Kenya Science Teachers College in Nairobi, Sven jumped at the chance to serve. He, his wife Karin and three children, Annika, 15, Ola, 12, and Klas, 10, set off for Kenya.

Sven was moved by the extreme poverty and privation in the villages outside Nairobi. "It was heartbreaking," Sven says, "especially the children. You would see them sitting against the mud houses, listless and idle." He was convinced that given time he and other professional Swedish educators who had come to Kenya could improve the lives of those children by focusing on early childhood education. He realized that he could do something positive; that it was his turn to help make a difference.

The family's first months in Kenya passed quickly—a time of excitement and optimism. "It was in an almost euphoric spirit," Sven remembers, "that we decided to spend our Christmas vacation on the pristine beaches near Mombassa." The children packed bathing suits not skis. The family loaded up a car and headed for the palm-studded white sands of the Indian Ocean.

On their way back from their seaside holiday, their car hit a patch of loose sand, careened and overturned. Twelve-year-old Ola was killed. How, Sven wondered, could he go on after the loss of his beloved boy?

He decided that the best way to heal himself and his family was to stay in the country where he had lost Ola, finish his two-year contract and

rededicate himself to the education of Kenya's children.

When news of young Ola's death first reached Sweden, Sven's colleagues in Vasteras responded with a wave of sympathy and offers of help. It seemed only fitting to create a fund to support his work and to honour the memory of his son. In short order, an endowment for the education of Kenyan children arose out of the tragedy in Mombassa: the Ola Memorial Fund.

As a new decade dawned, money raised through the Ola Fund opened a nursery school in a village 45 kilometres from Nairobi. They called it Ndithiati, which meant "stop over place," because herdsmen had once rested and fed their cattle there. Now it was hoped it would be a starting place for children on their way to public school.

Over the next couple of years the spontaneous outpouring of private donations grew into a formal organization that matched Swedish sponsors to individual Kenyan students. One of the early donors was Hilde Back, a teacher at Sven's college. A small, resolute woman with a lively intelligence, Hilde was a Holocaust survivor.

"I was ten when Hitler came to power," she remembers. As the threats to Jewish families began to mount, her parents decided to seek safe haven for their children. Hilde's two younger brothers were sent to Sweden in 1939 under the program called Kindertransport. Hilde, age 17, who had trained in childcare, got out in 1940.



A family Christmas for the Magnussons. Ola, far left, died in a car accident in December 1969—a tragic event that was to change the course of several lives.

PHOTO COURTESY SVEN MAGNUSSON

In July of 1942, Hilde learnt that her parents had been rounded up with other Jews and sent to a work camp. Later that year her mother wrote to tell Hilde that her father was dead. She received one last letter from her mother, written on January 8, 1943. Not long after, Hilde learnt that



A young primary school teacher in Sweden, Hilde Back was to make a decision that would change a young boy's life.

her mother had been deported to Auschwitz. Hilde never heard from her again.

After her parents' deaths, Hilde Back decided to become a teacher. "I wanted to give my pupils my best, to show them how to be human," she says.

With her visceral concern for education and human rights, it was natural for Hilde to support the fund. But it would be another year before she would sponsor a young Kenyan boy's education.

The goats woke up the little boy. There were five of them jostling in the pen in the corner of the mud hut where the children slept. Restive and hungry, the goats sneezed, urinated and bleated to be fed. The boy rolled over in his bed, a gunnysack stuffed with leaves, and looked up at the dim light seeping through the gaps in the roof made of flattened tin cans. He was hungry too. Breakfast would again be cold corn porridge. But he had hidden a banana in a hole in the wall. He would eat that later, after he returned from the market where his mother, Regina, sometimes sold vegetables from their garden.

Six-year-old Chris Mburu was the youngest of seven children, a quick, inquisitive child with large almond eyes that took in everything at a glance. He was energetic, restless, always on the move, and though he loved to laugh he sensed how precarious his family's existence was.

The family's dilapidated hut squatted on a quarter acre of rented land in the village of Mitahato that was barely

PHOTO COURTESY HILDE BACK

enough to keep a garden and a few chickens and goats. During the course of their childhoods, all the children had worked alongside their mother Regina at a plantation, harvesting coffee beans. It was a 14-km walk to get there, 14 km back. A hard day's labour earned the family two shillings. But despite his parents' best efforts, the family was falling deeper into poverty, and his father left for Mombasa in the hopes of finding work.

On this day, when Chris and his mother carried vegetables to the open market, Regina heard women talking about an amazing new nursery school named Ndithiati. Founded by Europeans, its goal was to draw students from the poorest of the poor—and it charged no fees.

If poverty was the criterion, the Mburu family met the requirements. Regina went straightaway to see school officials to put her six-year-old son forward as a candidate. Chris was admitted.

So, for one wonderful year, Chris attended Ndithiati. "We had rice and porridge and sugar there," he remembers, smiling broadly. The school provided not only food for his body, but for his agile mind as well. He discovered he loved learning.

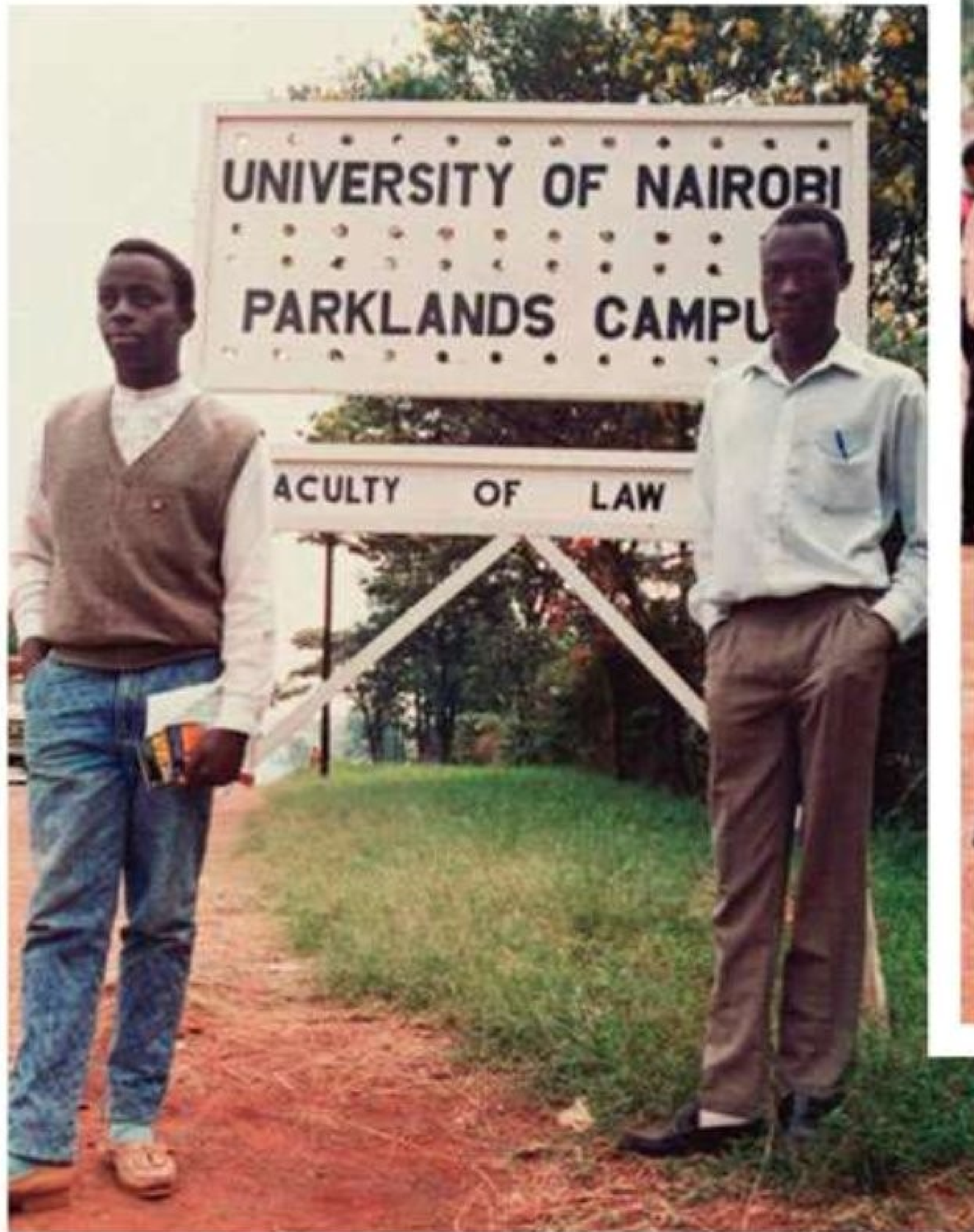
But when that year ended, it seemed his education would come to an end too. His family simply didn't have enough money to pay the small fees required for him to continue his education at the state-sponsored primary school.

Like thousands of other Kenyan children, poverty and ignorance would be his fate. The seven-year-old would lose everything he had come to love—a chance to learn, to dream, and maybe someday to be someone.

Nothing in the world could have prepared Chris for what happened next. More than 7000 km away in Vasteras, Sweden, primary school teacher named Hilde Back reached across the distance and differences that separated them to alter the course of his life.

Hilde opened a letter from Kenya that introduced the young boy whose education she was sponsoring.

Hilde Back opened an envelope with a patch of colourful stamps in the upper right corner. It came from the village of Mitahato in Kenya and contained a letter introducing the boy with whom she had been partnered and whose education she was now





Left to right: Chris with his best friend and classmate outside the campus of the Nairobi Law School; Graduation day with his proud mother at his side.

sponsoring. His name was Christopher Ndungu Mburu. She would learn that he had been a bright, talented student at the Ndithiati nursery school. Now in 1973 he was in primary school and with her financial help (the equivalent of about ₹600 a month) was doing extremely well.

More letters followed. And photos. One showed him dressed neatly in white shirt and shorts standing in front of a hut. He wore a huge, megawatt smile. Hilde would answer the letters. The boy would respond. The correspondence would continue for years.

One Christmas, Hilde sent Chris a new pair of shoes. To Chris, who like most children in the village went barefoot, the shoes were a miracle. He put them on and raced around with joy. Raised in the local Catholic Church, Chris thought of this far-off woman as nothing less than an angel who had rescued him. "Very few kids in my school wore shoes," he now explains, "and those who did were from rich families. I was so excited that I wore them to school."

In class, his high spirits and shining new shoes attracted attention. A disapproving teacher scolded him: "You are too proud. You go wearing shoes when others do not have them. How can your family afford shoes when

PHOTOS COURTESY CHRIS MBURU

your house has so many holes in it that I can see you in bed sleeping?"

In hierarchical village society, teachers are lords. The boy was humiliated by the teacher's words. He wanted to shed his new shoes and hide. It was his mother who urged him not to back down. The shoes were his. The teacher was wrong.

It took bravery for any student, let alone a poor one, to defy a teacher. Expulsion was always a paramount fear. Yet Chris went back to school wearing his shoes, and proudly wore them to church every Sunday.

The new shoes had given the boy a reason to stand out from the crowd and be strong. Hilde Back's sponsorship at school had given him the opportunity to develop his native intelligence and to channel his considerable energy to good purpose. All was preparation for even greater challenges that lay ahead.

It was a time when it was dangerous to be young, educated and advocating for political change.

Chris passed the secondary school exams with flying colours. And in 1980, at age 14, he was sent to Nairobi to Queen of Apostles, an all-boys Catholic seminary. Hilde Back's continued sponsorship paid for his room and board.

By 1979, after a decade of sponsorship, Hilde and Chris lost contact. Chris was swept up in the tumultuous events in Kenya. Democratic self-rule was falling apart. An outcry against government suppression went up from educated Kenyans, favourite targets of President Daniel arap Moi.

Chris was in his last year of high school when political threat hit home. An older, distant cousin he greatly admired, a professor at Kenya Science Teachers College and an activist for democratic change, was arrested and sent to prison for three years.

The injustice of the arrest shocked Chris. "I saw this good man led out in handcuffs," he recalls. His cousin bravely stood up to the false accusations and personal abuse. "The struggle must continue," his cousin told him. Chris took those words deeply to heart. Now he had a direction for his energy and a cause for which to train: human rights.

Chris entered the University of Nairobi graduating with the class of 1990 with a major in human rights law. It was a time when youthful movements began to rock authoritarian regimes

worldwide. In Kenya, at that time, it was dangerous to be young, educated and advocating for political change.

Chris was all of these. He had joined *The Nairobi Law Monthly*, a journal that published articles by lawyers and activists. Soon the journal was earning global renown while enraging Moi and his party. The World Association of Newspapers granted the journal its coveted 1991 Gold Pen of Freedom award. The award would be presented to the editor in Athens to international attention.

Kenyan officials took action. The editor of the *Monthly* was jailed for sedition and his passport confiscated. No editor. No ceremony. No award. Or so Moi's party officials thought.

Chris took matters into his own hands. He secretly boarded a plane for Athens and accepted the award on behalf of his editor. When Chris flew back to Kenya, officials were ready. His passport was confiscated and he was followed everywhere by police. It was a matter of time, he believed, before he himself would follow his cousin and his colleague into a Kenyan jail.

Yet Chris's lonely stand in Athens had brought him unexpected rewards: the 25-year-old had stepped into the international spotlight. Amnesty International and other human rights organizations advocated on his behalf. His passport was returned. And just in time, too, for he had been awarded a Fulbright scholarship to Harvard Law School in the US. Suddenly, the world was welcoming the village boy from Kenya.

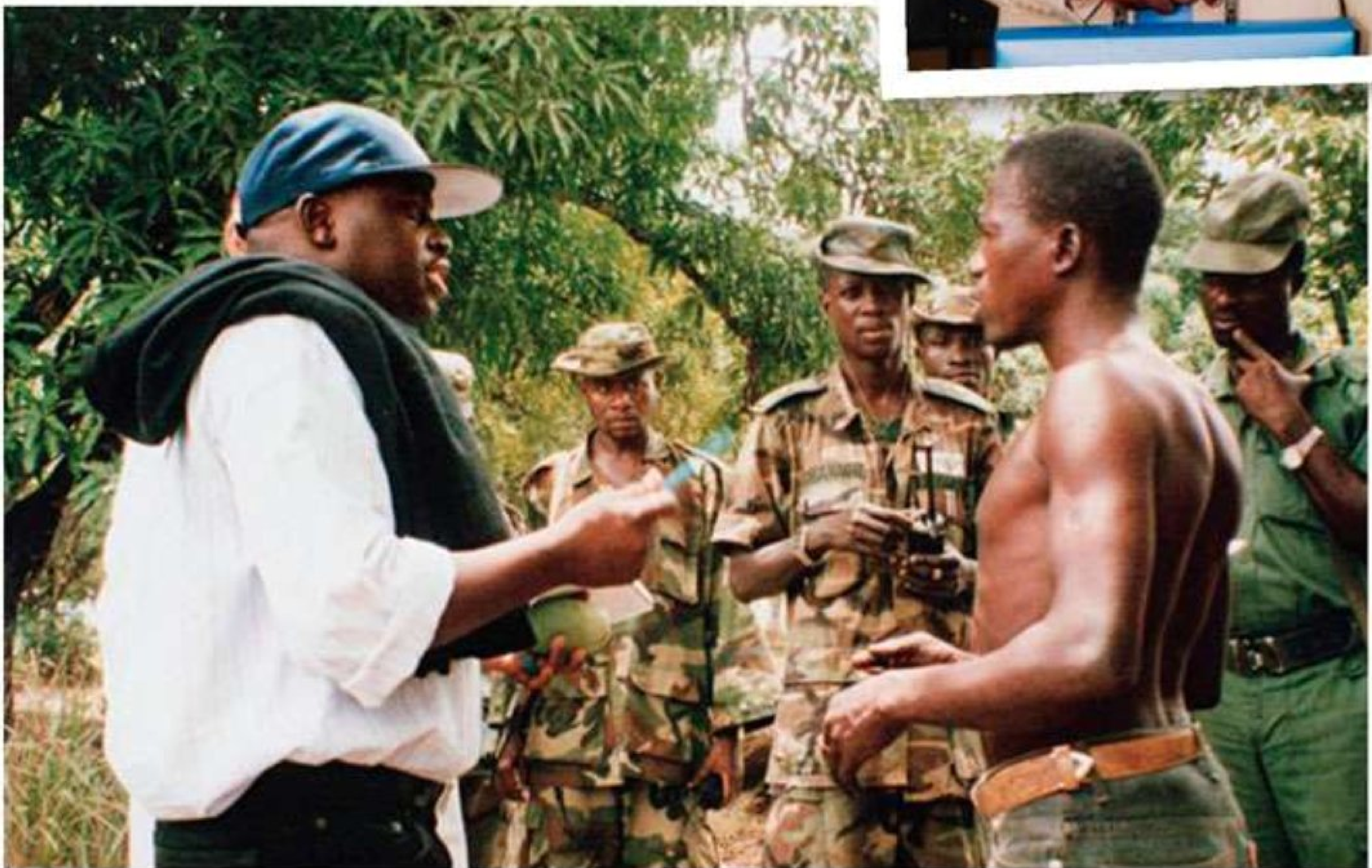
By the turn of the new century, having witnessed so much carnage, Chris's spirit and energy were gone.

In 1993, Chris graduated from Harvard Law, majoring in human rights. The hungry village boy sponsored by Hilde Back had soared beyond his family's dreams. He served in several human rights organizations and was eventually hired by the UN as a peacekeeper, trained to stand up for those who could not stand up for themselves.

Throughout the 1990s, Chris travelled the Third World organizing the efforts of aid agencies on behalf of refugees. He was in Guantanamo Bay working with Haitian refuges for the UN. There he met Leslie Cummins, a fellow human rights worker from Canada, who would eventually become his wife in 2003 and the mother







PHOTOS COURTESY CHRIS MBURU

From Harvard Law School, Chris went on to work with the UN in several countries including Ethiopia.

of their three children. But for nine long years they maintained a relationship interrupted by Chris's postings to one war-torn African country after another.

In Sierra Leone in the late 1990s, in the midst of a civil war, Chris saw heads on stakes as warnings to the populace. Bodies, pink and bloated, floated in the bay beside the country's one golf course. These atrocities were often the work of child soldiers, village boys who were not as lucky as he.

By the turn of the new century, having witnessed so much carnage, Chris's energy and spirit were gone.



Hilde and Chris, now dear friends, relax together in Vasteras on the occasion of Hilde's 85th birthday.

In the autumn of 2001 he returned to Kenya to take a job doing research on the Great Lakes region of Africa —and he went back to Mitahato, his childhood village.

Making his way among the crowds of barefoot children wearily following their mothers to pick coffee beans, he was appalled to see how little had changed. In the faces around him Chris saw the same unmistakable marks of poverty and hopelessness he had seen across Africa. These were the conditions that allowed evil men to transform children into killers. But how to break the cycle of despair?

The answer came to Chris with absolute clarity. He would do for the children what the Ola Fund had done for him: send them to school.

With typical energy, Chris plunged into this new endeavour. Through the Swedish embassy in Nairobi, he contacted Hilde Back, his old benefactor, and began a new correspondence. She gave her approval to his plan to start a scholarship, called the Hilde Back Education Fund in her honour. It would assist bright children from poor Kenyan

PHOTO COURTESY CHRIS MBURU

CHALLENGE ANSWERS

SEE PAGE 175

Lock in place D.

Coin dance Surprisingly, the answer is twice, even though the circumference of the coins is the same. How can this be? One revolution comes from the coin revolving around itself, as it would do if the fixed coin weren't there. However, in addition, the moving coin makes an orbit around the fixed coin, which counts as a second revolution.

families to attend high school.

Chris's vision was to create a future generation of leaders imbued with a deep respect for human life. He used his own savings and donations from family and friends as start-up money. A ceremony to inaugurate the fund was scheduled for May 2003 in Mitahato—and Chris insisted that Hilde come.

He waited for her at the Nairobi airport. Dressed in a white safari hat, holding up a sign "HILDE BACK" in bold black letters, he was shaking with nervous excitement. Would she like Kenya? Would she like him? "I was waiting to meet for the first time, the woman who had changed the course of my life." He was like a child meeting a long-lost parent.

Chris, Hilde and Sven all meet and the gift that began with young Ola's death goes full circle.

Then, there she was; a tiny woman with curly, greying brown hair dressed in a white blouse, black sweater, and a heavy blue Swedish winter jacket. A large suitcase was in one hand and a travel pack was slung around her neck. Chris rushed forward to embrace her. He took her luggage and enfolded her small white hand in his strong black one.

On May 16, Chris brought Hilda to Mitahato and introduced her to his mother. Overcome with emotion, he watched the two women embrace. At the end of the inauguration ceremony, Regina helped dress Hilde in the traditional Kikuyu garb, making her an elder of the tribe. And the fund in her name began a new cycle of giving.

On Hilde's 85th birthday in 2004, Chris made the journey to Vasteras, Sweden, to celebrate with his benefactor, now a dear friend. Hilde's apartment was on the top floor of a modern building on a hillside. He rang the doorbell and was welcomed inside. The flat was neat and orderly. In the living room several small, striking paintings that her father had collected hung on the walls. They were poignant mementos that the teenage refugee had secretly carried out of Germany in her luggage 64 years before.

Guests, Hilde's old friends and colleagues, began to arrive. Dressed in a dappled lavender blouse, Hilde greeted each of them with an exuberance that belied her years.

The doorbell rang again. It was Sven Magnusson, Hilde's old friend and Ndithiati School's founder. At Hilde's invitation, founder, sponsor and model student were coming together for the first time. There was an instantaneous connection with the



In Central Park, New York City, on a trip to UN Headquarters in the autumn of 2011.

distinguished man with the grey hair. "Everyone in my village knew about him," Chris relates. "From the moment I met him, I felt I had known him all my life—and in a way, I had."

Sven, Chris learnt, had kept up his commitment to the children of Kenya. In one village hospital the portrait of a young man is displayed with the words: "In memory of Ola, a 12-year-old Swedish boy, who lost his life in Kenya. His memory has carried hope to many Kenyan children." Sven and his wife Karin also later adopted two abandoned Kikuyu children—a boy and a girl—who are now grown and successful citizens of Sweden.

There was food and laughter and tributes to the small woman whose little gifts had profoundly changed the life of one Kenyan boy. Now, her guests had brought gifts—money that they stuffed in an old purse Hilde had hung on a door handle.

The money was not for her, of course, but for a new generation of boys and girls in Kenya.

In 2011, there were 165 Hilde Back scholars in secondary schools in Kenya. This year, some 200 more boys and girls will join them. Chris Mburu continues to work to foster human rights. He currently is currently serving as Senior Human Rights Advisor to the United Nations in Rwanda. More information about the Hilde Back Education Fund can be found at: hildebackeducationfund.com ■

RD Living

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BE WARNED

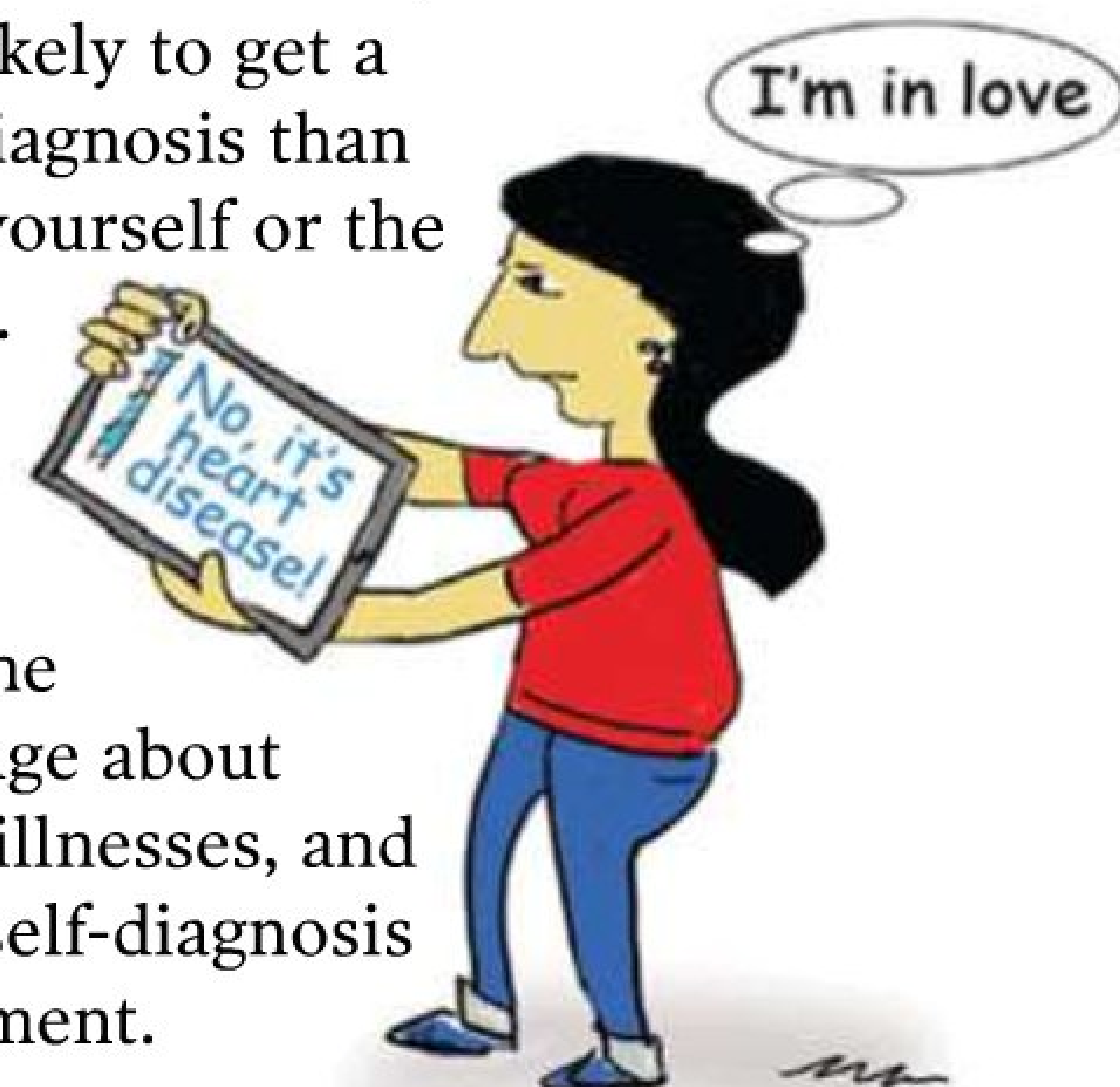
Don't Be a Cyberchondriac

If you make the Internet your doc, remember these

BY NEETI VIJAYKUMAR

Regular self-diagnosing based on an Internet search of symptoms is a sign of "cyberchondria," a modern variant of hypochondria. One study found that the Internet has the potential to escalate medical concerns and increase your anxiety. So while you're online, consider these:

- **The source** Some websites may provide inaccurate information, or they may be biased by what they try to sell. Sites that are edited, reviewed and monitored by major health centres, universities or government ministries are the most reliable.
- **Locality** Most of the info available on the Web is of global nature. Sometimes, medical information might be irrelevant to people of culturally different lifestyles or locations.
- **Context** A search engine does not consider factors such as age, medical history, family background and other medically important aspects. Its job is only to provide links to websites, based on some non-medical parameters. This is why pages about, say, brain tumour linked to a common symptom, headache, come up in top search results, even though the chance of brain tumour being the cause of a headache is relatively low.
- **Consult a doc** After a thorough physical examination, you're likely to get a better diagnosis than one by yourself or the Internet. Use the Internet only to gain some knowledge about various illnesses, and not for self-diagnosis or treatment.



MULTIVISION GRAPHICS

WHO'S RIGHT?

Is Meat Good or Bad for You?

BY CHRIS WOOLSTON

What You've Heard

Some of us may love the taste of red meat, but maybe our carnivore cravings are killing us. After tracking food choices of more than 121,000 adults for up to 28 years, Harvard researchers found that people who ate about 85 grams of red meat every day were about 13 percent more likely to die—often from heart disease or cancer—before the study ended than people who didn't eat meat. And daily servings of processed meat such as bacon raised the risk of early death by 20 percent. Saturated fat and cholesterol are only the start of meat's diet dangers. Overloads of iron can threaten the hearts of meat eaters; sodium and nitrates make processed meat even worse. It's no wonder that many experts recommend reducing or eliminating red meat from your diet.

Trim visible fat off meat before cooking to make it a healthier choice.



But Wait ...

A 2012 report found that people who regularly eat lean beef get more protein, zinc, potassium, and B vitamins than people who don't. And a 2010 report estimated that lean beef accounts for about 15 percent of protein intake but only about 4 percent of total fat. "Lean meat is a healthy thing," says Carol O'Neil, PhD, a coauthor of both

(MEAT) ANDREW SCRIVANI/GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY CBS TELEVISION DISTRIBUTION/STAGE 29 PRODUCTIONS

HOW HEALTHY PEOPLE EAT

Indulge without guilt with these tips from the physicians on US television's popular show, *The Doctors*.

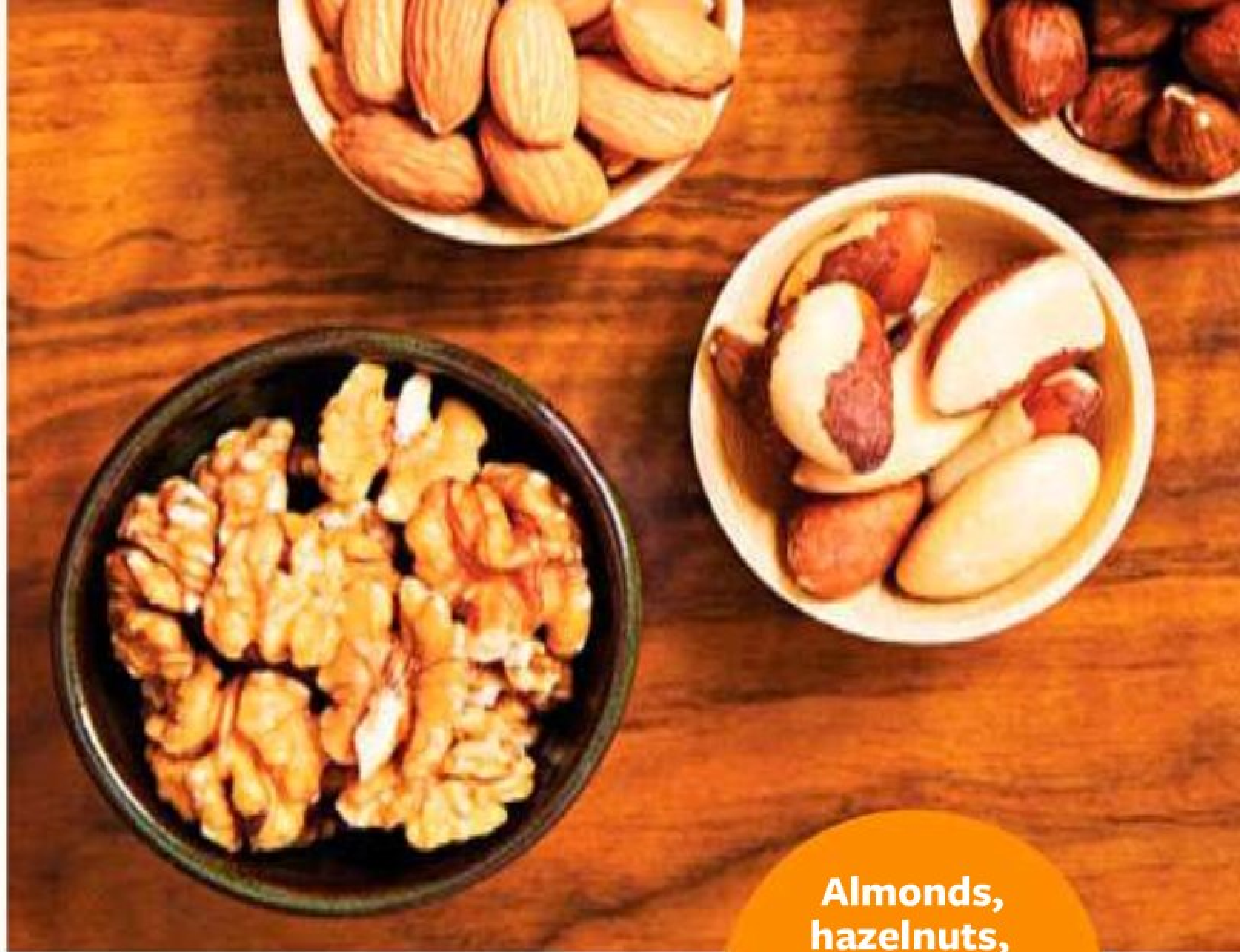
- **GO LEAN ON RED MEAT** Choose round, sirloin, or tenderloin; these cuts have about the same amount of fat as a piece of skinless chicken breast. Avoid prime and T-bone.
- **EAT LESS** The perfect meat portion is about 85 grams (about the size of a deck of cards), which may be smaller than many restaurant portions.
- **SEAFOOD** Salmon and tuna contain abundant levels of omega-3 fatty acids, healthy fats that may improve the retention of brain cells.
- **BROWN CARBS** Whole grains, which you digest slowly, provide fuel for your brain. (Although your brain accounts for only 3 percent of your total body weight, it uses 20 percent of energy.) Rich sources include whole wheat bread, brown rice, quinoa, and bran flakes.
- **BERRIES** Rich in protective antioxidants, blueberries, strawberries, and cranberries are linked to better memory and coordination.
- **COFFEE, WINE, DARK CHOCOLATE** These indulgences are also packed with brain-healthy antioxidants.



reports and a professor of human nutrition and food at Louisiana State University, USA.

So What Should You Do?

You can still fit an occasional serving of red meat into a healthy diet. Choose lean cuts and avoid processed meats (bacon, sausage, bologna—anything preserved with salt, curing, or chemicals). With fruits, vegetables, and whole grains to round things out, enjoying a steak isn't a high-stakes gamble.



Almonds, hazelnuts, Brazil nuts, walnuts ... any nut can go in the microwave.

HOME COOK HELPER

5 Things You Didn't Know You Could Do With Your Microwave

Go beyond the basics of reheating leftovers with these surprising shortcuts

BY FAITH DURAND ● ADAPTED FROM **thekitchn.com**

1 TOAST NUTS

Forget preheating the oven just to make a small batch of aromatic nuts. Instead, spread any variety you like in a single layer on a microwave-safe plate. Microwave in 1-minute intervals, stirring between each. When nuts are crunchy and smell toasty (3 to 8 minutes, depending on your microwave), they're ready for a starring role in your morning oatmeal.

2 FROTH MILK FOR YOUR LATTE

You don't need to be a barista—or invest in special equipment—to create airy foam. Fill a small lidded jar halfway with milk, then cover and shake until the milk becomes frothy, about 30 seconds. Remove the lid and microwave for 30 seconds. Pour the milk into your coffee, holding back the foam with a spoon, then scoop foam on top.

3 POACH EGGS

Whip up a speedy lunch: Crack an egg in a microwave-safe bowl or mug, then pour in ⅓ cup water and ½ tsp vinegar. Cover with a microwave-safe plate and cook for

WORD OF THE MONTH

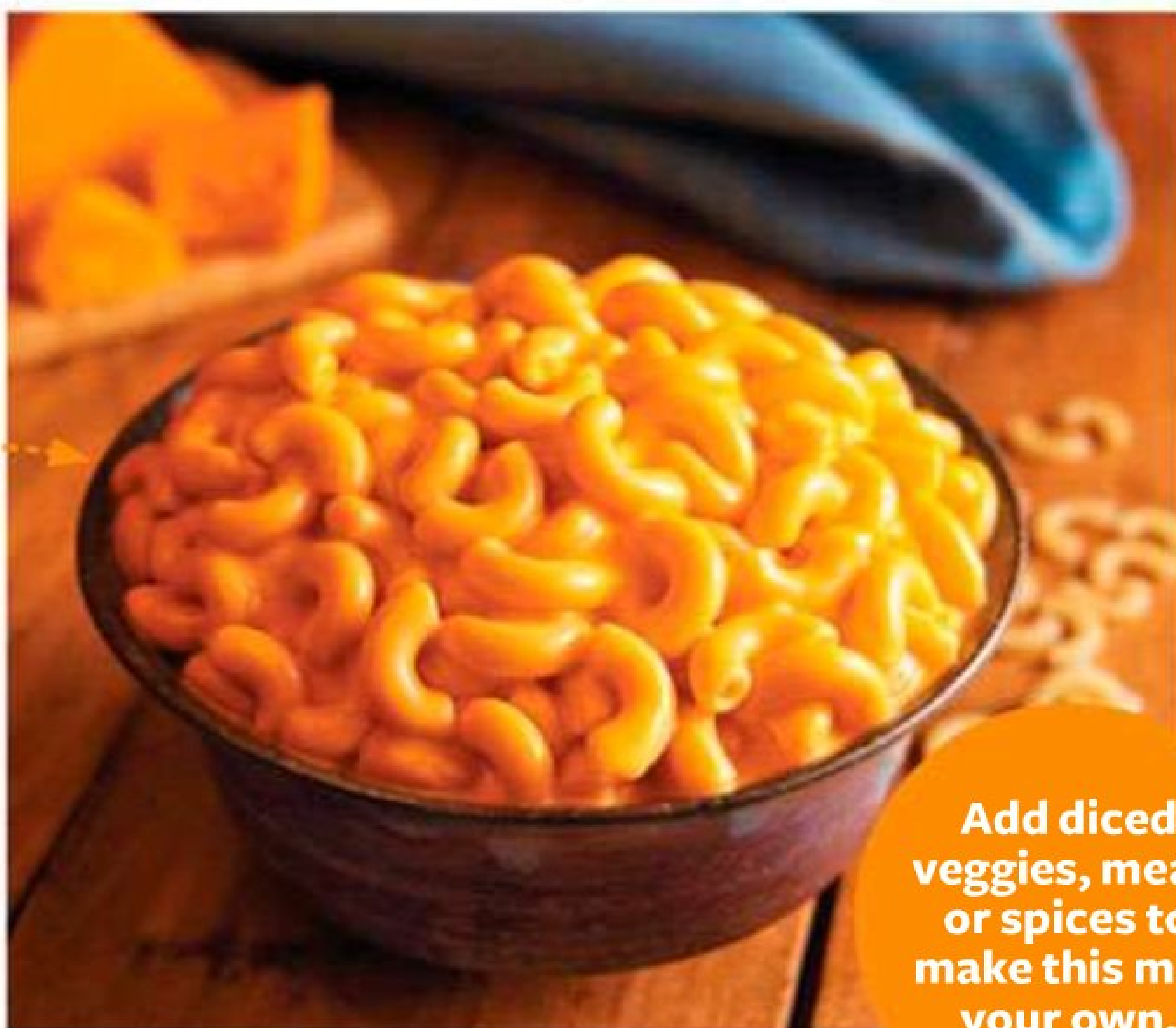
"Jeroboam"

The term for those extremely large bottles of wine that are displayed in wine and liquor stores. They hold the contents of four to six regular-size bottles, explains *babble.com*

Synonym: *double magnum*

CORBIS

1 minute at 80 percent power. Check the egg; continue cooking, 20 seconds at a time, until it reaches your desired state.



Add diced veggies, meat, or spices to make this mac your own.

4 MAKE SINGLE-SERVE MAC AND CHEESE

Get both the convenience of the boxed stuff and the satisfaction of homemade with this 10-minute dinner. Combine ½ cup macaroni pasta, ½ cup water, and ½ tsp salt in a microwave-safe bowl. Microwave on high in 2-minute intervals, stirring between each, until pasta is al dente, 6 to 8 minutes. (Add 2 tbsp water, if needed, to fully cook pasta.) Stir in ¼ cup milk and ¼ to ½ cup shredded cheddar cheese. Microwave for 30-second intervals, stirring between each, until the cheese melts into a rich sauce.

HOT TIP

BREAD, ETC, FRESH AGAIN

It's something so simple, but few people know that microwaving a slice of old bread, or a bun, for 10 seconds can make it oven-fresh again. (If it was stored in the fridge, it may require 15 or 20 seconds.) Same with chappatis, halwa, jalebis. You can also roast oil-free papads in the microwave—if you have three or four, just spread them on the turntable and do not stack them. *M.S.*

5 POPCORN

No need to buy pricey (and preservative-filled) bags of microwave popcorn when you can make your own. Add about ¼ cup corn kernels to a large microwave-safe bowl and set a plate slightly askew on top. Or fill a brown paper bag with about ¼ cup of kernels and fold the top of the bag over a couple of times. Microwave for 2 to 3 minutes or until most of the kernels have popped. Remove and sprinkle as desired with butter, salt, and other toppings.

DAN COHA/CORBIS



A CEO offers deep thoughts *without* the help of PowerPoint.

SHOWTIME

Your Next Great Presentation

Five things *not* to do

BY KEVIN SURACE FROM *Inc. Magazine*

1 DON'T USE POWERPOINT. You don't want your presentation to look like everyone else's. Use Keynote, the Mac software that combines video and images and has great transitions.

2 DON'T USE BULLET POINTS. You should be shot for putting stuff in bullet points. Why put text on a slide? You want people looking at *you*. If you need to give statistics, highlight a few things people should remember, or put the numbers in a visual context, such as a pie chart.

3 DON'T BE SELF-EFFACING. They came to see you, the expert, so stand up and be the expert. Be friendly and energetic, and try to have fun. That means never talk from behind the podium. It's a brick wall between you and the audience.

4 DON'T LEAVE OUT THE EMOTION. Lots of people want to be careful and professional when giving a talk. You should want to emote. Swing your audience's emotions back and forth. You need to say "Here's how bad life is. Here's what it can be. Here's how we get there together."

5 DON'T BORE US WITH FACTS. If you say "I'm going to present 19 slides on the technology we make at Timbuck Widgets," nobody cares. Show them how the facts are going to change their lives.

E-MAIL VACATION!

Do not chronically check work e-mail all the time and on your phone—it keeps you on high alert with higher heart rates. Taking a break from work e-mail can lower stress and improve focus.

Source: UC Irvine and US Army study

FRANK HERHOLDT/GETTY IMAGES

LOOKING GOOD

Hair Myths Debunked

Separating truth from follicular fiction

BY ELISABETH KING

Myth: Shiny hair is healthy hair.
Truth: Haircare manufacturers keep this widely held belief alive. But, except in rare cases, the hair that grows out of your head is healthy even if it's not as shiny as you'd like. There's no shine test to determine the overall health of the hair. Straight hair is shinier than curly hair.



Myth: Daily shampooing damages hair.
Truth: If you use a mild shampoo, it's OK to wash hair daily. Opt for opaque, creamy shampoos over clear formulations.

Myth: Brush your hair up to 100 times a day to make it shine.
Truth: According to the old wives' tale, you need to brush to disperse the natural oils in your hair. We now know that this happens whether you brush or not. The danger of this old-fashioned tip is that over-vigorous treatment can tear hair shafts and damage roots.



Myth: Daily blow-drying thins hair.
Truth: Trichologists say that daily blow-drying can dehydrate hair and make it frizzy if you don't use a heat-protection styling product. Thinning hair, though, is mainly caused by hormones, age and heredity.

Myth: Vitamin supplements will make hair grow faster.
Truth: Vitamins B_6 and B_{12} are necessary for healthy hair. Most people get enough of these by eating a balanced diet or taking a daily multivitamin. Taking mega amounts won't make hair any healthier than it naturally is. Supplements that claim to increase hair growth and strength don't do much either, say dermatologists.

ISTOCKPHOTO

SMART SAVING

Light bulbs

The time of conventional light bulbs has run out. Fluorescent lighting is not particularly suitable for home use and while the already familiar energy-saving [CFL] bulbs are a good option, high-luminosity LED lamps offer the most favourable features for both ambient and spot lighting. Here's why:

- **Price** The cost of LED bulbs is still relatively high, but just as it was for the energy-saving CFLs, prices for these too are beginning to moderate, and the price-value ratio is definitely favourable.
- **Consumption** While CFLs' energy consumption is about one-fifth of that for conventional bulbs offering similar luminosity, LED lamps use only about one-tenth as much electricity as incandescents (a 5W LED lamp can provide as much light as a 50W conventional bulb).
- **Lifespan** Compared with the CFLs' 8000- to 10,000-hour lifespan, LED bulbs in general can last 30,000 to 50,000 hours, and even 100,000-hour lamps are now available.
- **Colour** The most advanced LED bulbs offer a wide range of colour temperatures, and are even available in natural hues such as warm white (WW), daylight [or dynamic] white (DW), as well as in numerous tones suitable for ambient lighting.
- **Direction** In the wake of directional LED spots, blurbs, luminaires and UFO lamps made up of 40 or 50 tiny LEDs are able to illuminate space in every direction.
- **Switching** LED lamps switch on instantly, and frequent on-off switching does not reduce their lifespan.

You want
- LED lamp
- 50,000-hour lifespan
- Warm light

Cherry on the top
- Flexible LED strip

Bonus tip
- Dimmer



¡Challenge!

Challenge yourself by solving these puzzles and mind stretchers, then check your answers on page 164.



A



B



C





D

E

Lock in place LEVEL 1

Which of the pieces marked A to E, when fitted to the red piece above, will form a perfect square?

Coin dance LEVEL 2

Two coins of exactly the sam e size and circumference are touching each other as shown. While the bottom coin remains perfectly still, the top coin revolves around it once completely, always remaining touching. In making one complete circuit around the bottom coin, how many times does the top coin rotate through 360°?





Studio



"DRUMMERS" BY A.V. ILANGO
ACRYLIC ON CANVAS, 76 X 61 CM, 2002

Chennai-based painter A.V. Ilango painted from memory this scene from the temple festival of Gobichettipalayam, the picturesque Tamil Nadu town where he grew up. The festival is held in summer to appease the rain gods, and this Oyilattam folk dance is an important part. Ilango, 62, sketched the drummers, capturing a decisive moment in their swirling motion. The artist has an MSc in mathematics to which he attributes the linear and spatial quality in his works. More Ilango paintings at *avilango.com*

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